University of Alberta

Social Issues in Design Practice: Learning from a Community-based Project in Sackville, New Brunswick

by

Aušra Burns ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology
Department of Art & Design

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127H Main Street
Sackville, New Brunswick
Canada
E4L 4B2

February 11, 2002

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Social Issues in Design Practice: Learning from a Community-based Project in Sackville, New Brunswick* submitted by Aušra Burns in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dr. Rosalind Sydie

Prof. J. Frascara

Dr. E. Higgs

Dr. D. Sayer

Dr. Richard Buchanan
Carnegie Mellon University

Date: February 11, 2002

Abstract

This dissertation is based on a two and a half year (1998-2001) case study that focused on social interactions in relation to a building project in the community of Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada. The study discusses the planning, design and construction of the Tantramar Regional Civic Centre - a public and recreational amenity for the town and surrounding region. The case study examines the ways in which accumulated knowledge informed practical action in the interplay of community life and the built environment. Qualitative research methods developed and commonly applied by anthropologists and sociologists were used in conducting fieldwork and collecting and analyzing data.

My primary goal in this dissertation was to contribute critical insights into what I consider reflective and responsible design practice, and in particular how this practice can be transformed and enriched by an interdisciplinary approach. The literature and theory review draws a contextual map for the case study and my discussion on design as a social practice while presenting ideas and works that form the basis for historical and contemporary discourse on urban theory, urban design and design practice. Integral to an expanded notion of design practice is recognition of the complexity of human existence. Design can transcend traditional disciplinary understandings related exclusively to form-giving to engage with popular culture, increase technological and environmental awareness, and acknowledge the gendered behaviours and power discourses of everyday living.

In this dissertation I have referred to the combined effort of individuals and groups involved in the Tantramar Regional Civic Centre project: the architect, myself, and other community members and professionals, as I attempt to identify and discuss the particular contribution of the designer in this context. Evaluation of the principles of design practice employed included an assessment of how the designer was able to adhere to historically established criteria for design practice such as professional rigour, technical knowledge, skills of communication and collaboration; and an assessment of how the designer was able to adapt these principles to the specific social and cultural setting.

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List of Abbreviations

CAO - Chief Administrative Officer

CBC - Canada Broadcasting Corporation

HRDC - Human Resources and Development Canada

MLA - Member of the Legislative Assembly

REDA - Regional Economic Development Agency

TRCC - Tantramar Regional Civic Centre

TRCCB - Tantramar Regional Civic Centre Board

1.0 INTRODUCTION

My research and design work moves toward a "hybrid category of design activity," (Agger, 1998:54) and recognizes the urgency of problems related to social interaction. In my approach I wish to grasp the important threads of meaning and significance that weave relationships in public life, and to critique certain self-evident aspects of a community's life - specifically with regard to the built environment. In this respect I turn to the works of social theorists who view the "small" sociological discourse in sociology as superior to the "abstract analytical sociology that replaces actors and experience with structures and functions" (Agger, 1998:54). These are the reasons I consider the community participation approach and the case study as important research procedures.

I define my theoretical and professional position as one that is located between the disciplines that work to create environments, plan organizational strategies and reflect on the consequences of the actions taken. My university education started in the field of architectural design and was later enriched by studies of social sciences and social theory. I have long felt that my contribution to society could be enhanced if I were able to embrace both the traditional position of the architect or urban designer and that of the social scientist or theorist. When I started working in urban design, I found I was posing questions that had seemingly little to do with the discipline of design as I knew it. When answers weren't right at hand, I had to look for them in books from various fields and through contacts I had with people from other disciplines. Occasionally, fellow students and designers challenged my direction, asking if I had chosen the right professional path, inferring that I was diverging from my primary responsibilities as a 'form giver' because I was not confident enough in my creative capabilities and skills. I did not lack such confidence, but had come to realize that given my particular interests and concerns, practicing design responsibly meant applying knowledge from such disciplines as urban studies and sociology. Fortunately, I had chances to meet people who shared my interests and recognized the validity and value of an interdisciplinary approach to design. They

reinforced my conviction that there is a need to expand the theoretical and educational base for interdisciplinary and collaborative work in design.

1.1 Interpretation of my professional contribution and responsibilities

In this dissertation, I have referred to the combined effort of individuals and groups involved in the Tantramar Regional Civic Centre project: the architect, myself, other community members and professionals, as I attempt to identify and discuss the particular contribution of the designer in this context. To achieve this I have intentionally placed myself in a position which enables me to dissect the process of design from the 'inside' of everyday practice. From this position I aim to offer critical insights and renewed perspectives on how this kind of design work can become more socially responsible and responsive.

The design of built environments is an activity directed at creating spaces of daily living and interaction affecting people's behaviour, emotions, knowledge and attitudes. I intend to show that effective and socially responsible design is a problem-oriented, interdisciplinary action that addresses human problems. The tools and methods of such activity should be shaped by disciplines that are concerned with the problems at hand, and tailored to reflect the specific social and environmental context. Thus, the aesthetic, formal and visual dimensions of design are intertwined with the pragmatic dimensions that address social, political, engineering and other contextual aspects of the project.

While I stress the necessity of addressing the social responsibility of the designer, I have to emphasize that design action is contingent on many social and political factors, and should be considered as a situated attempt to transform the environmental and social balance of a particular setting. Design cannot eradicate crime or discrimination, or erase family violence in the community, but concerted strategies, including communication, can significantly reduce the severity of the problems and increase the quality of life. Beyond adopting greater moral responsibility for my actions, gaining a more profound awareness of contemporary social conditions, and enhancing my knowledge of methods, I

can aim to embrace the diversity of human experience, fundamentally shifting my standpoint within the profession. The key to making this transition, I believe, is to adopt theoretical and action paradigms that enable me as a designer to influence social change through interpretation and negotiation. This stands in marked contrast to design practice based on authorship and the imposition of opinions and expertise.

The diversity of these concerns does not signify to me a loss of direction in design. As a designer working on urban design issues, the complexity I discover in conceptualizations and perceptions of the built environment serves to encourage me to continuously revise and adapt my working methods to the contextual criteria of each design situation, and to assess the forces shaping people's attitudes and actions.

I address many issues of design practice through practical involvement in projects where I can reflect on my own actions and the results of the collaborative work of other participants. My role in the current Civic Centre project in Sackville, New Brunswick, has been to respond to contextual information and help create the conditions necessary for the project to progress and succeed. As it developed, interest in and support for the project increased and caused changes in the power balance between people working on the project. The building itself and its location, the community, the political turmoil surrounding funding, and other issues continuously shaped design decisions up to construction, and will continue to affect the Centre and its users during the future use and habitation of the space.

I confronted the task of making a transition from creating the conceptual design to the development of the facility through sharing responsibilities and knowledge with the users, the architect and town administrators. However, "[t]he design and production of the building up to so-called 'completion,' constitutes only a small part of architectural time" (Rendell, 1998:232). The on-going use of architectural spaces, their maintenance and later transformations or decay should become concerns of the designer, not only for legal-administrative reasons, but because the designer is involved in a continuous creative intervention. 'Follow-through' is part of the realization of the design *process*. I view my participatory role as one that extends beyond past efforts and current reflection on the

project toward facilitating future equitable and rewarding use of the Civic Centre. This may involve advocacy, participation in programming, or actual physical transformations to the space.

2.0 CHAPTER 1: The Case Study

My general research framework is formed to respond to the question of how design can be a socially responsible and reflective process. The approach in this thesis indicates that I perceive a need to reconsider the role of the designer in society. I concentrate on the links between design and the social sciences, especially as they relate to the experience, use and creation of public spaces. The transformation of the role of design can be achieved by shifting designers' modes of practice from authorship (dictatorship) to interpretation and participation.

The orthodox notion of design as a disciplinary activity is product-oriented, largely concerned with formal features of objects. It rarely recognizes that social and political processes profoundly influence designed objects, environments and information. In reaction to such a disciplinary mode of theorizing and practicing, I submit that knowledge generated in other disciplines can lead to a new creative and intellectual design activity and practice that reflects changing socio-economic conditions of society.

2.1 Description of the dissertation topic

This dissertation is based on a two and a half year case study that focused on the social interactions in relation to a building project in the community of Sackville, New Brunswick. In this study I discuss the planning, design and construction of the Tantramar Regional Civic Centre - a public and recreational amenity for the town and surrounding region.

The town of Sackville has approximately 5,400 permanent residents and is located in the south-east part of New Brunswick near the Bay of Fundy and the Nova Scotia border. Despite its modest size, Sackville is a regional focal point, drawing people from even smaller communities for employment, shopping, and visits to the doctor or the Sackville Hospital. While small rural elementary schools exist in some nearby towns, children are bussed in to Sackville's Middle and High schools from as much as an hour

and a half's drive away (see Plate 1).

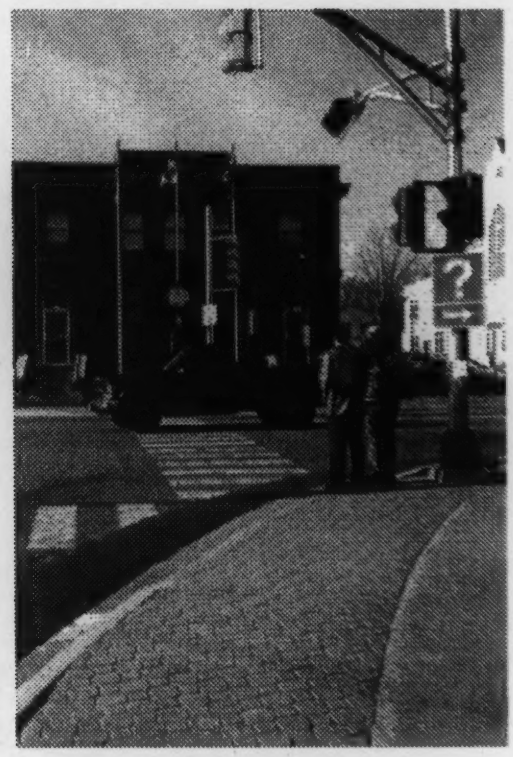

Plate 1 View of Main Street intersection looking toward Sackville Town Hall

One of the most prominent features of the town is Mount Allison University, established in 1839 as the Mount Allison Wesleyan Academy (see Plate 2). This institution greatly influences life in Sackville and draws to the town 2,300 students yearly, increasing the overall population during the academic year by almost 50%. The town's household incomes are higher than the provincial average, largely because of the higher number of university jobs per capita. Mount Allison employs 500 people. However, town residents are divided along income lines into those who hold full-time employment at the University or in one of a few other lucrative jobs, and those who are

employed in seasonal work, maintenance and agriculture. The population of Sackville has decreased slightly over last few years. Between 1991 and 1996 the number of residents decreased by almost 2% (Statistics Canada, 1996). Demographics and the availability of employment elsewhere, according to many people, have played a major role in setting this trend.

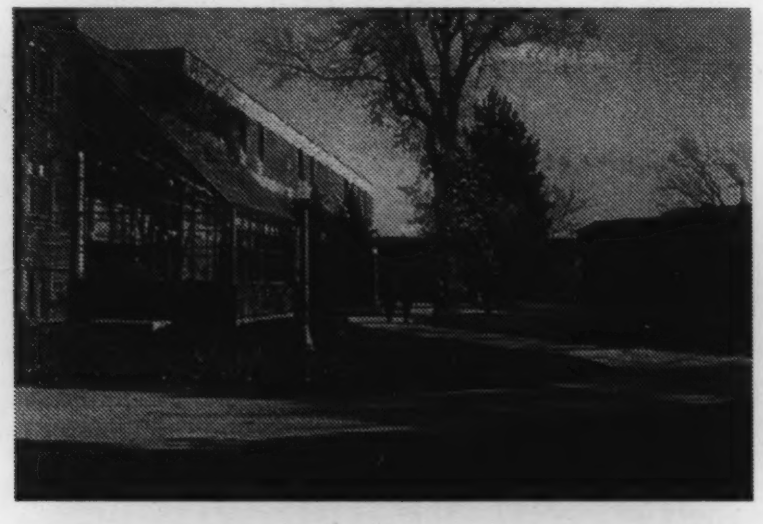

Plate 2 Mount Allison University quad

During the period from 1999 to 2001, I participated in the planning and public consultation process regarding the design and construction of the new local Civic Centre. This participation involved attending meetings; engaging in collective discussions; and reviewing architectural, landscaping and construction plans and surveys of public response to these plans. I helped the local planning team to negotiate a mutually acceptable vision for the Centre and its function within the community, and aided in mapping possible plans for its future maintenance and programming. Later in the process, together with the project initiators, I had to plan for the downsizing of the project from a multi-purpose centre to an ice rink. While working on this project I met many people in town, and heard many points of view about the Centre and what was good for the town. Through this endeavor my relationship to the community grew stronger.

The following are general questions I addressed while taking part in the Civic Centre project and during the development of the dissertation research arguments:

- What are the elements that contribute to public interaction in Sackville, New Brunswick?
- What kinds of relationships can be identified in the town between social interaction and the built environment?
- What are the conditions forming these relationships?
- How can we gain a better understanding of these relationships and effectively use this knowledge in design practice?

In this study I inquired into the conditions for the coexistence of parallel notions of 'mainstream,' 'official' and 'marginal' public life. These realities seldom 'bleed into each other.' For example, according to one local university professor, some families in Sackville who have lived in town for more than 50 years have never set foot on the Mount Allison campus. I also analyzed the discourse behind concepts such as 'public space' and 'public activities,' seeking to understand how these notions are constructed within the community.

2.2 Formulation of the methodology: the case study as a direction in knowledge generation

A recognition of the complex nature of social space and its meaning has affected my choice of methodology. I selected the case study as a form of inquiry because it best reflects my epistemological orientations as a social researcher and the working methods I have developed throughout my work as an urban designer. I contend that knowledge gained through work on design projects does not accumulate in an absolute sense; rather, it transforms us and leads us to more informed insights. What accumulates, of course, is not a catalogue of events defined by frequency or location of occurrence, but images, sensations, and perceptions of the critical links and causal relationships. This accumulation becomes a wide web of practical knowledge which cannot easily be labeled

as 'true' or 'false.' In such an approach, whether the research and design transformations are concerned with peer relationships, work strategies, perceptions of images, or patterns of use in built environments, detached reflection based on a purely theoretical way of thinking is transformed into discussions and negotiations between the researcher and the user-participant.

The critics of focused ethnographic research note that much recent academic work on urban environments "has concentrated upon specific localities *within* cities using ethnographic fieldwork data in order to elaborate narratives of city life that no longer claim to represent 'the urban.'" These critics argue that the tendency to write specific 'stories' of urban life fractures the understanding of important relationships existing between those narratives (Westwood and Williams, 1997:6). They claim that such an approach does not sufficiently recognized that localities are highly influenced by larger and broader social, political, environmental and cultural forces, and that case study based research tends to romanticize the city by distancing its particular localities from the conflicts of urban life (see Squires, 1994). Another important argument presented by critics of focused ethnographic work is that ethnographies produce a rather static 'slice of life' where time is transformed into 'the ethnographic present,' making it difficult to generalize and to examine social processes in their temporal scale.

I have reflected on such concerns, but expect that the explanatory power of my case study is more important than its representative typicality. As I have been exploring in detail the daily life of Sackville, and discussing issues relating to the funding, design and use of the Civic Centre with the local public and a group of people who are closely involved in the project, my belief has been reinforced that such a situation or phenomenon cannot be viewed as self-contained and bounded geographically or socially, or remote from urban conflicts. On the contrary, the account I offer delineates an array of conflicts over the Civic Centre project.

One of the means by which I was able to achieve depth and breadth in an argument focused on public life in the community was to locate my observations and findings within the historical context and social processes that influenced the actions and

perceptions of people in Sackville. I believe that contextual knowledge of the aspects that impact people's lives and their environments (such as employment markets as they relate to gender and household income level, environmental health of the region, population migration patterns) binds the webs of significance in the study.

Previous work and research experience led me to believe that as a researcher, community member, and active participant in this study and the related civic project, I would encounter the moral dilemmas of professional conduct and my own interests and biases as a 'newcomer' in the community. Positioning myself in this way, I intend to deconstruct my 'intellectualist bias' - my standpoint as a disengaged researcher observing the world as a spectacle (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:69).

My complex role in this case study allowed me to destabilize the dualisms of dominant culture and alterity, private experience and public life, and practical action and theoretical reflection. My position embodies Gillian Rose's (1993:155) conceptualization of the position of the subject that occupies both the centre and the margin - a position that allows renewed critical reflection which can be politically productive. While being directly involved in this community project I was simultaneously aiming to integrate social research and sociological knowledge into design work.

The mode of communication I strive to use and refine in my work is based on partnership *with* the public (as opposed to preaching *to* the public, or working *for* the public). Choosing to ***help*** a community realize its goals does not mean that the creative contribution of the designer is diminished (see Frascara, 1997:17). On the contrary, this contribution can be supported and made more likely to lead to effective results as other parties offer perspectives and knowledge about certain aspects of the problem. It is also important to recognize that "the architect and user both produce architecture, the former by design, the latter by inhabitation" (Hill, 1998:140). Therefore, including the public in the process of design increases the likelihood that there will be a meaningful continuum between the creative contribution of the designer as architect and the creative role of the user as one who experiences and enacts the habitat.

My goal has been to use research techniques that are relevant and practically

usable in my given project. I used qualitative research methods developed and commonly applied by anthropologists and sociologists in conducting my fieldwork and collecting and analyzing data (Ellen, 1984; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995; Larreau and Shultz, 1996). As part of the research I have made photographic images of town life and kept a journal recording my observations. I noted patterns of daily public behaviour and interaction in a variety of locations, such as video lottery terminal areas in convenience stores, public parks, the post office and the fitness club. I have recorded information and ideas gathered from solicited interviews, statements of opinion voiced at public meetings, and longer talks at dinner parties. I also analyzed the findings from sociological and other studies that have been conducted in the area by such groups as the Rural and Small Town Programme (Jordan, 1999). I contextualized my research findings by referring to historical sources and current media reports, especially those published in the local newspaper - The Sackville Tribune-Post.

With respect to arguments of theoretical legitimacy, I assume that all narratives (official interpretations, accounts of community members, and my own chronicle of the experiences of life in the community) have a truth value in that they represent people's attempts to describe and make sense of their own lives. At the same time, individuals' narratives about their lives, to some extent, reflect the definitions and discourses of reality given to them. Careful analysis of the details of daily existence helped me gain theoretical insights into the nature of the community.

The findings and data produced from recording my observations of behaviour in various situations were organized according to parallel and intersecting themes. Themes included reflection on discussions of the Civic Centre Board, media reports on town events and the project in particular, and my own dialogue with town residents regarding the project. These themes signified certain aspects or problems associated with public interaction in the town. In my ethnographic fieldwork and data gathering, my goal was to convert the primary evidence of the case study into a narrative that is culturally or symbolically meaningful. This narrative reflects my reconstructions of the detailed texture of public life.

In my research work I moved back and forth between theoretical and empirical tracks of analysis, and in my writing, between explanation and description. In order to research and understand this particular environment, and take practical steps toward transforming it, I aimed to interlace the themes of public interaction in town, the progress of the Civic Centre project, my own perceptions of life in town throughout the year, and reflections on methodological and theoretical issues I pursue. In the dissertation, attention to details of everyday interaction enabled me to move toward theoretical discussions regarding significations and meanings of particular events and relationships in their socio-physical settings. The case study discusses the ways in which accumulated knowledge informed practical action in the interplay of community life and the built environment.

With respect to the design focus of this research, I maintain that the fluidity and diversity of concepts we operate with in our daily design practice make it necessary to adopt flexibility in our methods of work and research. As architect Denise Scott Brown remarks, it is a sense of professional responsibility that moves her to accept the diversity and temporality of social agendas and meanings attached to designed spaces and buildings in the city. Instead of following the rigid directives of dominant ideologies, Denise Scott Brown (1996:215), in her daily work, chooses the more difficult route of negotiating mutually accepted agreements between parties involved. She admits, however, that "ideologies come and go and functional needs change with time, yet our buildings may remain." As difficult as it is to concede, we might never be able to determine the ultimate method or the perfect methodological package that would free us from continuous self-questioning, end our creative search, or address all the transformations in our working context. Cities, places, societies, and the emotional responses of people will change. "Each situation demands specific responses, and all that methods can do is help us approach each new situation with a more sensitive and efficient eye" (Frascara, 1999:121).

2.3 Research objectives

My primary goal was to contribute critical insights into what I consider a reflective design practice, and in particular how this practice can be transformed and enriched by an interdisciplinary approach. Integral to an expanded notion of design practice is recognition of the complexity of human existence. This recognition involves transcending traditional disciplinary understandings related exclusively to form-giving and engaging with popular culture, increasing technological and environmental awareness, and acknowledging the gendered behaviours and power discourses of everyday living. While conducting the fieldwork I reflected on my own participation in the design of the Civic Centre. I consciously attempted to analyze where my participation in the project complemented the designer's/architect's contribution to the project, and how professional and nonprofessional collaboration occurred in the socio-cultural context.

I have also striven to be useful to the community of Sackville while applying knowledge I have gained in my education as a designer and social researcher. Interdisciplinary skills help me in understanding issues that the people of the town are dealing with, and in communicating their concerns to architects, planners and bureaucrats. According to John Dixon (1996:20), many architects are facing this "relatively new burden"of readjusting their role in the professional field, and sharing the design authority with bureaucrats and community groups. One of the questions that has to be posed in this context is whether changing modes of praetice are disabling to the creative potential of the designer. However, if one takes the standpoint of defining creative inspiration as the ability to 'grow' through meeting different people, confronting new ideas and complex problems, and working for the people one works *with*, the value system built on the cult of specialist-designer will cease to be seen as the sole source of what is valuable and beautiful.

My theoretical orientation has been influenced by the works of intellectuals from various fields of social science, the humanities and design theory. I have adopted the

notion that social life is complex and contradictory and cannot be defined, explained and controlled by precise laws of science. For this reason I build my arguments in part by referring to work and thoughts of social theorists who are, for one or another reason, looking for analytical and action oriented alternatives to the positivist notions of research.

My intention was to achieve a more reflective understanding of the issues in question, to develop conceptual and practical insights based on that understanding, and to communicate my findings to academics and professionals across disciplinary boundaries (these disciplines include the social sciences, cultural theory, architecture, urban planning and design). I hoped to engage in socially responsible research and, through my direct involvement in the project, expected to contribute to raising people's awareness of varying forms of political and symbolic domination, as well as exposing the intricacies and processes of community planning.

In the following chapter I will present ideas and works that form the basis for historical and contemporary discourse on urban theory, urban design and design practice. I will analyze concepts and terms such as 'public,' 'private,' 'community' and 'public interaction' which are critical to the subject of the dissertation. This literature and theory review draws a contextual map for my discussion on design as a responsible social practice.

In my work, the blurring of disciplinary boundaries takes place in practical design projects. This is where a wealth of information gathered from various sources and fields of knowledge finds its role and purpose. When I present my case study findings I will return to ideas raised in this chapter and communicate how this collage of disciplinary knowledge was integrated in my research. I will further discuss how it can be extended into discussions or theorizing on the potentials of interdisciplinary knowledge generation.

3.0 CHAPTER 2: Theoretical background

3.1 City and country

While most of the following discussion on framing concepts such as public space and community will refer to the context of large metropolitan areas, it is important to note that in modern times ways of urban living are not confined to geographic city limits. Rather, the function and representations of human settlements and their social and built environments depend on how the modern condition has influenced these environments and their respective inhabitants. While the city and the country have been more often conceptualized as separate, if not antagonistic spheres, the connections and mutual influences between these socio-physical environments are powerful elements continuously reshaping both city and country.

Historically, social theorists and researchers have identified urban and rural communities as distinct socio-physical formations. The defining characteristics of rural or pre-industrial communities were their small size, homogeneity of interests and behaviour, and lack of population turnover (in particular immigration) (Wirth, 1938). These communities did not separate the notions of public and private. Their communal organization and social relations were defined by interaction of primary groups of family members, relatives and friends. The same character of interaction extended from home environments into the outside space.

The concept of urbanity was developed as the antithesis to the rural way of life, and as a qualitatively different "organized complexity" in contrast to the less complex rural environment (Jacobs, 1961:29-111). While the urban community has evolved from its historic predecessor - the rural community - the emergence of public space supporting public interaction became one of the defining attributes of the urban way of life. In addition to having public space, the city was seen as large, dense and heterogeneous (Wirth, 1938).

It would be simplistic to say that urban growth is a progressive process, from

basic to elaborate social structures and spatial relations. Even in the largest and most complex of cities, people do congregate, or are forced to congregate - for various economic and social reasons - in smaller units and communities, and their activities are frequently located in functionally distinct areas. Along with dense and intricate city centres, contemporary urban environments contain new equivalents of more specialized and less complex spatial formations such as residential suburbs, industrial areas and business parks. The age of advanced transportation and global communications makes it possible for these spaces to be located on the outskirts of the city alongside rural and small town environments, still fulfilling their functional urban roles. These residential divisions, districts, ghettoes and enclaves often combine the features of rurality, urbanity, and post-urbanity.

Urban spaces such as shopping malls with their vast parking lots, for example, have come into existence because of developments in transportation, distribution patterns and the conditions of supply and demand in the economy of the industrialized world. Further, the continuous proliferation of surrogate historic town-like suburban neighbourhoods exemplifies the conscious attempt to introduce specific living environments that offer a 'simpler' way of life - essentially ersatz rural residential settlements that become part of the urban environment. As much as the rural community phenomenon is historical and has changed dramatically since pre-urban times, the symbolic representation of it captivates the imaginations of the ever-growing contemporary urban population for its "'we'-feeling, the sense of a common destiny, common inheritance and a continuity that is greater than a lifetime" (Scruton, 1998:322). Although an increasing number of city residents are concerned with crime, congestion, and environmental pollution, and are moving from old inner cities into the countryside, they are not becoming traditional country dwellers. They remain functionally suburban, commuting to cities to work or connecting to urban environments through computers and other means of communication. Out-of-city urbanites also expect in the new residential settings recreational facilities and public spaces that accommodate their typically urban leisure demands (movie theatres, restaurants, and sports venues).

While these continuous processes of stratification and specialization result from varying conditions, they are intertwined and continue to permeate urban space, spill into rural areas and influence life in smaller communities adjacent to the bigger cities. Some of the planned simplicity or functionality is the direct consequence of urban growth and economic constraints such as land availability and value. Some of it is the result of society's continuous dialogue with the pre-urban past and a search for connectedness and a sense of community that some people sense was lost during the era of urbanization. As Ian McEwan (1998:vii) argues, "for city-dwellers, the countryside is a repository of longing and illusion; it is a place of nourishment and ancient wisdom; it is the garden from which we have been expelled". One of the consequences of the proliferation of these specialized and purposefully simplified spaces is a disturbance of the balance between public, private and parochial realms. This disturbance has a significant impact on the quality of living and experience of built environments in both larger cities and smaller communities. Disguising the city as countryside through locating new residences and businesses in the outskirts of the cities does take away the need to examine carefully and build upon the best of existing urban life.

Towns and rural communities are increasingly influenced by urban culture and its economy. As Paul Hirst (1998:111) asserts, "modern rural areas have very little in common with those of fifty years ago". While they remain different from urban environments in many "subtle and minor ways", their daily existence is increasingly defined "by social and geographical mobility, by the dominance of mass communications, and by manufactured identities". Most at least partially adopt and incorporate urban ways of living. One of the dangers in the process of urban assimilation of rural communities is that many small towns become adjunct parts of cities, frequently losing their distinct role as communal, cultural and economic centres. In this context, it is particularly important how, in making economic and cultural shifts, these communities resolve and formalize relationships between private, communal and public interests. Quality of life in suburban and ex-urban environments and the very survival of smaller towns depend on several factors, most especially how communities and governments respond to particular patterns

of contemporary urbanization. Further, it is critical how small communities balance openness to external influences with communal self preservation, where connectedness to something larger, and acceptance of mass society and the information age, is often complemented by community control and self definition through belonging to some kind of smaller association or group (Allen and Dillman, 1994:29).

Some of the most urgent issues pertaining to urban development, the quality of built environments, and the public life of these places in particular, come to the fore on the perilous meeting ground where the sprawling and compartmentalizing city encroaches on what is left of rural areas and small communities. Further, examination of existing problems and speculations about the future of built environments cannot be approached by considering either the rural areas or the cities alone. "The changes to our countryside result from forces which are changing our cities in equal measure, and these forces lie deep in the modern condition." (Barnett and Scruton, 1998: xiii).

3.2 The built environment as an arena of social interaction

Western debates over the nature of urban culture have acknowledged that built environments not only frame people's daily existence but, as social and physical phenomena, are capable of transforming the individual by influencing the person's relations to the community and surrounding world. Western notions of urban space and public interaction have been legitimized by identifying them with geographically bound structures or specific, planned, and controlled events. But physical sites designated as 'public spaces,' or officially sanctioned, programmed and organized public activities such as concerts, fairs or sports events, represent only part of the picture. Social interaction can manifest itself in activities that are diverse and that challenge geographic or temporal borders: from local to virtual and global; from temporally limited to continuously recurring; from overtly material to ethereal. On these spectra of social interaction one may see such diverse examples as a conversation or gossip with a friend on the street, singing at a school concert, sending messages to a 'chat group' on the Internet,

vicariously living the dramas of the rich and the beautiful on TV, or acts of symbolic signification of one's relationship to the community such as decorating one's house with Christmas lights or Halloween ornaments.

The range of experiences of space, and the opportunities for fulfilment through social interaction, are highly dependent on variables such as the social status, gender, ethnicity and age of the individual, and the cultural context and physical setting in which that interaction takes place. Spaces of common use - where people meet and observe others; where people can and do exercise their ability to control others; where the experience of danger, excitement, and joy of communication go side by side - these are central in forming the modern personality.

The interpretations of notions of 'public,' 'public space,' and 'community' in my work influence and shape the findings of the dissertation research. Therefore, at this point, I believe it is imperative that I provide contextual understanding of varying constructions of these concepts, and present the development of these notions historically and across disciplines including social theory, design, urban planning and architecture.

3.3 'Public' and the distinction between public and private

The term 'public' is interpreted in a multitude of ways by social theorists, architects and politicians. It is given varying meanings in order to define some particular or abstract group of people in whose name research studies are conducted, public policies are developed, or urban spaces are designed. The theoretical underpinnings behind constructions and understandings of 'public' have an impact on people's perceptions and use of built environments, and influence the criteria for design of built environments.

The origins and dynamics of modern divisions between the public and private are rooted in "nineteenth- and twentieth-century changes in the industrial process and their redefinition of the relations between 'home' and 'work'" (O'Sullivan, Hartley, Sounders, Montgomery and Fiske, 1994:250). As Linda McDowell points out, the notion that the public and private are separate spheres, each appropriate to a different sex, has a long and

contested history. McDowell (1992:15) writes that this spatial demarcation of urban space "has been of particular importance since the development of industrial capitalism and urbanization in advanced economies which resulted in the increasing separation of men's and women's lives".

As this distinction is now commonly understood, the public comprises the political, legal and economic. The public sphere is considered to be the world in which individuals work, vote and are accountable to the rest of society for their actions. The public world is cold, impersonal, and governed by abstract rules. It is a neutral ground for meeting among independent individuals. "Public space is a proper, lean, anonymous space, unclaimed and uncluttered. Public space is not home" (Bloomer, 1996:248). By contrast, the private realm is the personal and familial, the sphere of the household in which individuals retreat from the public. The private is presumed to be the emotional, warm retreat in which people are connected by particular relationships of affection, loyalty and mutual interdependence. Distinct values are associated with each of these spheres, reflecting difference in motivation, relatedness and loyalty (Bloomer, 1996:248).

It is important to remember that 'public' and 'private' can acquire different characteristics, and the relationship between these realms can vary, depending on social, cultural and geographic conditions. If one considers such countries as Brazil or Italy, the 'public' space is where, traditionally, much interaction and emotionally charged contact between people takes place. Childrens' play, work, family disputes and celebrations often occur in the public space. While economic and climatic conditions and relative size of the communities and spaces they inhabit are important, it can be noted that these systems of relations are constructed differently from, for example, many North American urban contexts.

Lyn Lofland (1998) identifies a specific 'middle ground' space, a "parochial" space, which can be located somewhere between the intimate private realm and the anonymous public realm. The parochial realm involves communal interaction and the environment primarily inhabited and maintained by a close community of friends, acquaintances and relatives. An example of such a space would be a neighbourhood pub

that draws 'regulars.' Parochial spaces are identified by consistency of familiar interaction rather than the unpredictability and anonymity of the public realm.

Following the Western orthodox notion of the public-private dichotomy, disturbance of the boundaries between these two worlds "has often been understood as a threat to identity, a loss of self" (Colomina, 1996:6). Nevertheless, interpretations of the relationship between these realms range from direct opposition, to close correlation, or result in a recognition that the concepts themselves are constructions. Jürgen Habermas (1989), Hannah Arendt (1958) and Henri Lefebvre (1996) have introduced the idea that public and private function in a dialectical mode and cannot be isolated from one another. The personal growth of the individual is empowered in the private domain. The other aspect of human identity - the political consciousness of the individual, is nurtured in the public space (Gottdiener, 1997:140).

If we accept this dialectical understanding of the private-public distinction, we see how contemporary concern over the transformation in public space can be explained in part by the invasion into the *private space* of the twin forces of consumerism and the mass media at the turn of the century (see Gottdiener, 1997). The end of public space, as explained by Don Mitchell (1995:121), coincides with, and is related to, society's rising expectations for interaction, politicization and communication within the private sphere. Public space is in turn retained for mere "commodified recreation and spectacle."

A material manifestation of privatized public space is the contemporary North American suburb. Competitive individualism is symbolized by suburban sprawl that allows spatial separation of private homes, and by the extensive reliance of suburban dwellers on private cars (see Garreau, 1996 and Jackson, 1994). According to David Chaney (1993:143), the car in the suburb "exemplifies private use of public space - it symbolizes social status, and provides a very precise expression of its owner's/user's social morality."

David Harvey has ascertained that the decline of the public realm in Western society is accompanied by tensions triggered by fear of crime and of conflicts between the diverse social groups that share spaces of daily habitation. Harvey (1996:420) strives to

find a theoretical framework that could strike a certain equilibrium between "the divergent politics of need and desire together," while acknowledging the political partiality of any attempts to introduce even the most inclusive and democratic reforms in the public realm. Although even the most inclusive compromise, according to Harvey, will serve one political interest better than another, he believes that in attempting to solve urban problems, the main goal is to arrive at a mutually acceptable conception of 'the public' which could be incorporated into the design of public space.

Feminists have introduced their own critique and conceptions of the public-private dichotomy - a radical departure from the traditional conceptions. Feminist writers have drawn attention to the division of labour and forms of power, based on gender, that have been naturalized in the patriarchal system. They contend that the private domain is constructed and determined publicly by law and other political and administrative means. In contrast to liberal theorists, feminists consider the private as a political sphere because in a family, in the privacy of home, individuals still exercise significant power over others.

The association of the female with domesticity has significant implications on how the organization of the urban environment has been employed to control women. They have been relegated to the private realm of homes or suburbs, physically and symbolically away from urban power and production centers. Women often feel vulnerable in public because they are seen as properly belonging to the domestic sphere (Valentine, 1992). Gillian Rose (1993:143) maintains that for women: "Being in space is not easy. Indeed, at its worst this feeling results in a desire to make ourselves absent from space; it can mean that 'we acquiesce in being made invisible, in our occupying no space. We participate in our own erasure.'" Rose (1993:143) recalls her personal emotions about being in everyday spaces of the city. "I have a strong sense of space as oppressive, for example, from being scared walking at night in the city in which I live." On the other hand, the city's crowds and spaces make it easier for many men and women to become anonymous, to escape to a certain degree from the control of traditional hierarchies. The mix of potentials and problems that the public city space represents to women accounts

for the ambivalence many feel with regards to this environment.

Over time, changes occur in the spatial divisions between public and private, and production and reproduction. Accordingly, gender power formations also change. Certainly, contemporary urban trends have affected gender relations. Elisabeth Wilson (1997:282) argues that women are less susceptible to patriarchal control in big cities than in smaller communities. New modes of production and reception, rapid computerization, and the rise of consumerism have in many ways "blurred the lines between consumption and production, public and private realms" (Ockman, 1996:207-8). The contemporary Western city is characterized by "increasing numbers of social axes," and this results in a "growing diversity of spaces"(Rose, 1993:133).[1]

Blurring, or 'muddying' the boundaries between public and private remains an ongoing project in feminist agendas. For example, the strategies through which feminist geographers pursue their goals include undoing, subverting and transcending the power-infused dualisms between dynamic and progressive time and static space; between the public and the private realm; between rational knowledge of, and the emotional responses to, the environment; and dismantling hierarchical dichotomies built on notions of masculinity and femininity. The 'disorder' of urban life does not disturb women, and therefore the "socialization of women renders them less dependent on duality and opposition" (Wilson, 1991:282). Taking account of space diversification, Ann Bergren (1996:89) regards a reflective city form as one that is open to the deconstruction of all oppositions and dichotomies: inside versus outside, private versus collective or public, and the hierarchies of male over female or youth over age. Wilson's conceptualization of the city as "labyrinthine" and centerless also eschews static dichotomies by describing the city as full of endless discoveries and constant change.

In architectural discourse, the blurring of boundaries between private and public space is interpreted by Beatriz Colomina as one of the inevitable consequences of human transformation of built environments. Colomina (1996:6) maintains that modern environments - "the technologies that define the space of the city: railroad, newspapers, photography, electricity, advertisements, reinforced concrete, glass and steel architecture,

the telephone, film, radio . . . war"- are the very manifestations of the disruptions of boundaries "between inside and outside, public and private, night and day, depth and surface, here and there, street and interior, and so on."

Many feminists are suspicious of claims that the home is a place of rest and seclusion, and assert that the home is a site of work, power struggles, conflict, as well as community connection (Massey, 1994:11; Hermanuz, 1996:235). Consequently, when considering the residential realm, feminist planners and designers challenge predominant building norms and design standards and propose "new forms of households: extended, nuclear, multilocational, polygynous, those headed by men or women, single or not, or even by children" (Hermanuz, 1996:237).

Feminist contributions have brought a more reflexive and situated analysis of urban life and the distinctions between public and private. Built environments are conceptualized by Doreen Massey (1994:265) as created from social relations. This means that they are filled with "power and symbolism" and that they are "a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and co-operation." To conceptualize urban space and gender relations anew, an anti-essentialist theoretical position must be taken. Such a position must challenge the gender dichotomies, acknowledge the dynamic and variable construction of gender relations, and recover the significance of emotion and the home in urban discourse. A theoretical and political goal of feminist geographers is the "rescuing" of space from its position as subordinate to the more dynamic notion of time. Space, from this vantage point, is conceived of not as static, but constructed out of social interactions. Time is therefore not spaceless (Massey, 1994:264). More specifically, the gendered character of communal spaces has involved a re-examination of what 'community' means.

3.4 Conceptualizations of 'community'

Community is both a contemporary and ancient concept signifying stability, order, regularity and security that is attained in association between persons. Community also symbolizes the sense of warmth that comes from striking a harmonious balance between experiences of shared and personal space. As an organized group, a community is expected to be self-regulating because of the presumed senses of shame and guilt one feels about acting irresponsibly toward another member of community.

Delving into a more detailed analysis of definitions and characteristics of community represents a significant challenge because the word 'community' "is always suggestive but never fully defined, holding out the promise of containing the values of interaction, mutual support and communality" (Till, 1998:63). I aim to highlight certain features upon which the constructions of 'community' are based, and to identify how those varying interpretations have an impact on the production of built environments.

While many people at the beginning of the twentieth century were captivated by the idea of the utopian community[2], the last several decades have been marked by the emergence of theoretical interpretations of the community as a socially constructed phenomenon. For example, Benedict Anderson introduced the notion of 'imagined political communities.' He identified how the concept of nation is reinforced in the consciousness of its members. The nation, according to Anderson (1983:15-6), is imagined as sovereign, limited, and united through horizontal comradery "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail."

From such a viewpoint, the idea of nation as community is deeply buried among the layers of appropriated cultural norms and values, and becomes a "common sense" understanding (Fry, 1995:196). If humans consider community as a web of continuous relations between people, the affective aspect and the emotional solidarity is critical to this concept. As much as individuals in such communities of 'thought and feeling' are bound by values that promote mutuality and understanding among their members, the terrain of feeling and values is always a contested one. As Richard Sennett (1977) points

out, the *idea* of community is often different from the *reality* of community. When members have conflicting ideas about the meaning of their community, the nature of such discord can have very real and long lasting consequences on the lives of people involved (see Sayer, 1997). For example, one of the consequences is the creation of "the myth of the purified community" which is set as a moral goal, but never fully achieved (Sennett, 1971:32). This is particularly evident in the contrast of community and individuality.

The origins of the Western conceptualization of community life that provides respect for individuality can be traced to the Greek polis. Humphrey Kitto (1951) describes the ancient Greek city as a framework within which citizens could realize their spiritual, moral, and intellectual capacities. He interpreted the community of the polis as supportive and humanistic, revolving around face to face contact, and characterized by ethical problem solving mechanisms and communal solidarity. However, the ancient polis was not the same place to everyone. Women and slaves were not citizens and did not participate in much of the public life of the polis. Most of the institutions of the Greek city were open only to free, non-foreign, male citizens. Therefore it is important to be aware that many of what we assume to be 'universal' values related to human situatedness in the community originated in an exclusionary and hierarchical social structure. Abstract discussions regarding the value of community experience have to be contextualized and take into account the perspective of the narrator and the historical situation.

In the twentieth century, sociologist Georg Simmel addressed the issue of the individual's relationship to the community in the modern metropolis. Simmel dwelled on the impact the functional specialization of labour and the money economy had on social relations in the daily life of the city. Urban community to him became a society of instrumental logic. People were valuable only insofar as they advanced another person's interests. The psychological nature of city life, according to Simmel (1971:410), is characterized by an "intensification of nervous stimuli". The intensity of experiences in the city forces the individual to resort to protection mechanisms from non-mediated physical and emotional interaction. This invisible screen that keeps the individual from

becoming overwhelmed is his "intellectuality."

As an antidote to the problematic notion of the modern urbanized community presented by social theorists such as Georg Simmel, Max Weber and Robert Park, there emerged another direction in twentieth century social thought - one that was oriented toward enhanced utopian visions. These visions were to be guides for the future development of urban communities. The physical metaphor of the 'clean' village as community space has been prominent in planners' agendas since the nineteenth century. A yearning for the more humane, naturally endowed built environment of the past inspired several alternate visions of city living. Two of the most influential were the 'garden city' plans of the Englishman Ebeneezer Howard, and the naturalist model of the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

One of the advocates of community revitalization through architectural and planning reforms was Frank Lloyd Wright, and his influential project Broadacre City.[3] Despite its utopian orientation, Wright's urban vision did not challenge the gender implications that the single family, suburban dwelling embodied - most particularly the association of women with home and domesticity and men with work and productivity. Wright also believed that the dignity of Broadacre residents would be achieved through mass land ownership. The beauty and goodness of the community would be defined by its organic architecture, where "no distinction exists between much and little, more and less" (Wright, 1996:378). Quality living would be accessible to all, not so much as a result of communal participation but through architectural integration of efficient roads and highways, and of all family dwellings into interconnected neighbourhoods. The idea of the public space as a garden, or a part of the old village, has resurfaced in contemporary suburban neighbourhood plans.

Another conceptualization of public space was influenced by the metaphor of the functional machine. While celebrating the "symbols of technological advancement (such as the automobile) and the efficiency of progress," planners and architects in their practice "avoided overt symbolic content and replaced the signifying city with an austere environment of concrete, steel, and glass in minimal geometric shapes such as the

rectangular box of the high-rise office tower" (Gottdiener, 1997:30).

Notwithstanding the questionable effectiveness of the utopian visions presented by architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier, much contemporary suburban 'community architecture' bears a remarkable resemblance to these architects' envisioned forms. They "represent the ultimate manifestation of the purified community, individuals claiming their own territory under a mythical feeling of collectivity" (Till, 1998:65). For example, the contemporary countryside in the industrialized world has gained a new significance as the newly discovered home of the 'traditional' community. New firms relocate to the countryside in search of "pleasant working environments" (Madani-Pour, 1995:26). The rural areas are often appropriated as spaces not 'contaminated' by urban diversity, therefore representing 'traditional,' 'family oriented' and 'safe' class and gender identities. This search for belonging and wholeness is, however, challenged by the inevitability of change, diversity and difference. That is, communities are 'impure,' open entities.

Lewis Mumford (1961:98) referred to the community as a "good container," and identified the importance of the community as a supportive environment which can absorb certain changes and adapt to minor interventions without jeopardizing the status quo of the whole group. At the same time, Mumford warned against the community that is too stabilized. When writing about the urban community, he noted that openness to a diversity of varied stimuli, and encounters with unknown and continuous challenges, make urban experience simultaneously exciting and vital. To carry this idea further it can be suggested that "the dream of 'wholeness' and 'coherence' is an illusion; there is no longer any total vantage point from which the city can be overseen, and 'fragmentation' should be considered, not as pathology, but as part of our condition" (Deutsche, 1990 in Robins, 1995:53).

An open community depends on diversity and change; it is porous in the sense that it is open to 'others;' space is a diversified possibility rather than a static entity. For example, the way relationships between public and private are conceptualized and negotiated in the context of community has a profound impact on the spatial dimensions

of those relationships. Public space can become a dominant signifier of such relationships. Some of the earliest Western examples of public space as a locus of public life in the community can be traced to ancient Greece. Surrounding the sacred centre of the Greek city was the agora, encapsulating the public hearth. This space contained the central civic, political and economic functions of the city. The concrete space of the agora has been replaced in complex societies with different spaces for the performance of the same functions. Meeting with friends and strangers, and exchanges of information and emotional contact, are taking place in such new places as shopping malls and on-line chat rooms.

An important space in the late twentieth century in this context is cyberspace. While virtual communities operating in cyberspace lack such traditional physical attributes as tactile and visual immediacy (at least for the time being), they nevertheless play an increasingly important role in the daily lives of diverse people around the world. The relative anonymity, the possibility of a relational rather than a hierarchical kind of communication, and the absence of spatial barriers in cyberspace offers a communal alternative to those who have access to such networks.

If we recognize the legitimacy of the 'imagined community' or, in other words, community as a social construct, then collectivities inscribed in cyberspace are no less valid than other forms of belonging. Such a recognition profoundly affects the conceptualization of the community's relationship to its physical environment. Analysis of the experience of space as a community place would have to incorporate a more diverse criteria for means of human association. The imaginary and real, and the material and cultural, should become integrated rather than be considered as discreet aspects of the human condition. Such integration can be achieved through the use of "relational" concepts, defining community as the locus for personal, social, economic, institutional and technological networks, and the gravitational centre for continuous crossings of "place-based relations and flows with electronic ones" (Graham, 1997:46).

3.5 Public space as an experiential realm

At the end of World War II, the task of rebuilding many destroyed central parts of European cities brought to architectural debates a preoccupation with public space. 'Public spaces' were understood as places of public gathering, both in the traditional sense of public squares, promenades, cafes, etc. and also in what was seen as its "most modern counterparts: railroad stations, bus terminals, landing strips" (Colomina, 1996:8).

Analysis of public spaces as architectural artefacts is valuable as it discloses much about the complex relationship between architecture and society.[4] However, historic environments are "filtered through centuries of change and adaptation," and their meanings are continuously redefined and contested, reflecting changing societal values (Roberts, 1996:118). Reflective inquiry into the notion of 'public space' should, however, go beyond analysis of particular spaces' manifestations to embrace a combination of social, economic, experiential and physical realms.

In the context of the city, the experiential realm largely comprises the places and objects of everyday life. Streets and backyards, parks and monuments become situated not only in the realms of architecture or urban planning, but also in the realm of the human environment, where a distinct object, feature or image is dissolved "into a world of perceptual experience" and can no longer be regarded as an "external location but as continuous with human life" (Berleant, 1991:77). In this way, broader cultural aspects of the formation of emotional responses are grasped through research that goes beyond the study of the physical qualities of urban form: its colours, smells, forms and textures.

Robert Park, a key member of the turn of the century Chicago School of sociology, wrote: "The city is . . . a state of mind, a body of customs and traditions, and of the organized attitudes and sentiments that inhere in these customs and are transmitted with this tradition. The space we inhabit is not, in other words, merely a physical mechanism and an artificial construction. It is involved in the vital processes of the people who compose it."(Park, Burgess and McKenzie 1967:1)

One of the most powerful and brilliant descriptions of public space as experienced

by individuals roaming the nineteenth-century Western metropolis was presented by the social theorist and philosopher Walter Benjamin (1997, 1955). Employing techniques of surrealism as well as avant-garde montage and cinema, Benjamin, writing on the basis of Baudelaire's work, created the portrait of an urban drifter, the flâneur, whose daily experiences were embedded in the "novel kind of beauty in the streets," through mundane activities of shopping, strolling, and socializing (see Wilson, 1997:280).[5] Benjamin realized that place - its features and symbolism - has a profound impact on the ways in which people as social beings understand, negotiate and live in built environments.

Benjamin's work has inspired other researchers. For example, following the seminal work of Henri Lefebvre (1991), who saw "the social and the spatial as indissoluble," a body of literature has been generated that recognizes space and spatiality as integral aspects of social relations (Westwood and Williams, 1997:6). Hillis Miller (1995) suggests that we cannot imagine 'space' as such. What *can* be conceptualized is the event or events that take place in a particular space. This narrative imagination implies that space is not a preexisting concept, but rather, it becomes actual through action and social relations and is in turn perceived and understood through the act of narration.

The French writer and critic Roland Barthes (1986) discusses the language of the city in his essay *Semiology and the Urban*. He analyzes the city space as a discourse and places it in the realm of language. One of Barthes' preoccupations is with the unstable and transient relationship in the city between the signified and the signifier. A monument such as the Eiffel Tower represents, to him, a pure signifier that attracts various meanings. In spite of Gustav Eiffel's initial attempt to justify his tower in terms of utility, the structure's primary role became that of the universal symbol of Paris. Barthes (1997:172-180) concludes that we should look to multiply not our surveys or 'functional studies' of the city, but our readings of the city.

One of the important arguments following from the association of public space with social consciousness and social action is that the decline of this space has impoverished public and private life in the contemporary society (Sennett, 1977;

Habermas, 1989; Chaney,1993). Social theorists Max Horkheimer (1974a) and later Jürgen Habermas (1992) identify the tendency for the replacement of public action with privatized action, and the obliteration of public space by centralized institutions of capital. Mike Davis (1992) has lamented the loss of public space in Los Angeles. He writes about the dark side of the contemporary metropolis which is characterized by both wealth and homelessness, and is divided by geological fault lines that spatially segregate affluent suburban enclaves from inner-city slums. One of the key features of the contemporary "spatial apartheid," according to Davis, is an obsession with physical security systems. "The old liberal paradigm of social control, attempting to balance repression with reform, has long been suppressed by a rhetoric of social warfare that calculates the interest of the urban poor and the middle classes as a zero-sum game" (1992:224).

While recognizing the validity of such arguments, it is important to note that class and political struggle, and difference and diversity, have always been at the heart of urban experience. The very value and uniqueness of urban space as social space is derived from, and mediated through, "a powerful set of political, sociological, and cultural associations" (Donald, 1997:181).

3.6 Public space as integral to urban life

Public space has historically been a vital element of urbanity. It came to life through deliberate interventions by architects, planners or designers, and through processes of human interaction and habitation. Hippodamus's famous plan of 450 BC for Miletus, the plans for Roman settlements, and the Renaissance era conceptions of 'ideal cities' can serve as examples of the drive to create public space through conscious and calculated design effort to impose order over disorder in urban life. Through the design of lived spaces in the Enlightenment period, and in utopian schemes for urban development that have been manifest in the design of 'model towns' of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the "concepts of order and control were interlinked with the possibility of

emancipation of humankind" (Madani-Pour, 1995:24).

The focus on urban space as an arena for personal development has, historically, been significant. This is illustrated in the work of Leon Baptista Alberti (1404-72). Like many humanists, classical literature and the archeological discoveries of ancient Roman remains opened up for Alberti the vision of a secular and rational public culture. A parallel exists between Alberti's conceptualization of the city and the Augustinian concept of Christ as the figure above in heavens, but with his feet on earth. The metaphor relates the image of the humanist's 'body' as a city, to the Augustinian idea of the church as Christ's body. The civic functionaries in Alberti's ideal city would serve as arbitrators, turning humanistic ideals into actions, and in this way disseminating these ideals among the city populace. In Alberti's city, the library takes the central position - a depository of texts replete with expressions of belief in humanistic ideals of civic virtue.[6]

Around the third decade of the twentieth century, ideas of personal freedom, the unity of built form and function in daily life, and reciprocity between human creativity and ethical values, were fostered by 'utopian modernists' Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright. Neither of these men's utopian visions was realized in its entirety, but their conceptualizations of the ideal twentieth century city have been enormously influential. For example, the ideas of the architect Le Corbusier (1929) - who claimed that streets were unnecessary evils - supported the notion of space as a stage for displaying individual buildings, each regarded as a piece of art to be admired. Accordingly, the space that surrounds these buildings became a passive viewing platform that allowed for admiration of the majestic monuments from various vantage points.

One of the earliest criticisms of such an approach to the design of the urban environment came from Jane Jacobs (1961). She maintained that everyday environments such as dwellings and shops form part of the continuous enclosed space, and are central to the experience of built space as a continuum extending from buildings to open spaces to everyday activities of people and daily interaction. A number of feminist theorists have also pointed out that throughout the course of urban development, architectural critics and historians have continued to emphasize artistic and social value of buildings as isolated

objects of art, rather than striking a balance between the value of the beauty and originality of buildings and their capacity to accommodate the complex and diverse processes of habitation. Critics of this form of abstraction point out that, as places, their significance and definition is established through the complex process of habitation (Friedman, 1996:217). Leslie Kanes Weisman (1996) believes that those involved in reflection on, and production of, urban form should reassess their priorities and accept wider criteria for examining and evaluating city objects and spaces.

However, accepting difference and diversity in the spaces of the everyday living and interaction could prove difficult for many. Both the factions of the medieval Mediterranean city, and today's walled neighbourhoods of Los Angeles (Davis 1992), represent the fear of difference. Segregated spaces such as enclosed courtyards, fenced parks and gated country clubs characterize the proliferation of fragmented, localized and specialized modes of socialization within a society. What is often left outside of the gates and fences of the exclusive domains is a 'no man's land'- an arena of crime and the territory of the 'other,' the destitute in a society.

The suburban mall, a place that simulates public experience in the spaces of consumption, is also a segregated space. Through its structural setup, visual spatial composition, and use of popular symbolic motifs typical of traditional public environments such as imitations of street lights, flower beds and outdoor benches, the mall simulates the downtown shopping street. In the North American urban context, malls had to compete with the downtown areas as spaces of communal interaction and consumption. Such projected symbolism of accessibility and warmth of the communal space, according to Gottdiener (1997), disguises the inherent selectiveness and exclusiveness of such places of consumption.

Control over public spaces is, however, never 'set in stone' because the use of such space constantly transforms its meaning and function. Many ideas that change our lives and are of greatest significance derive from non-architectural sources. In their daily affairs people are embraced by, and exposed to, complex visual information and diverse physical experience. According to Dagmar Richter (1996:116), "most of the spaces that

we experience are random and circumstantial, some of them consciously formulated, most products of chance." Many of such 'naturally occurring' spaces are lively arenas of public interaction and places of daily contact. For Douglas Suisman (1989), such spaces are signified by the boulevards of Los Angeles. The boulevards establish the city's overall physical structure and connect people between neighbourhoods on a metropolitan scale, but are also charged with social and political significance often as an arena of public unrest, of violent confrontations between varying groups in the city, and of rich and captivating daily life.

Many spontaneous and informal practices in spaces of everyday living are deeply significant to engaged individuals and groups, and can be very revealing to professionals such as designers. An example of such a practice is that of Latin American dwellers of the Bronx constructing, in the "vacant" land between apartment buildings, little houses that remind them of their 'home' country. These 'casitas' are filled on summer nights with the bustle of people enjoying comradery and the night (Cline, 1997:21). The suburban modernism of Los Angeles gave birth to another kind of public use of space; acres of concrete surfaces are ideal for skateboarding.[7] The spaces are redesigned by the skaters through conception of new moves and acts to be played out on particular concrete surfaces. In London, the cold and dark concrete undercrofts alongside the Thames "are constantly occupied by skateboarders" because of "the ramped forms and ready audience" (Hill, 1998:141). In these cases an architect's or a planner's contribution to the built environment is reinterpreted by the unintended and unforseen uses. These examples also remind us of the fact that a sense of enjoyment of public spaces such as a park or a street depends on matters that extend beyond demands for sufficient lighting, regular cleanup or policing.

The semantics of urban form can be manipulated consciously by introducing motifs of popular culture into 'higher' architectural practice. One of the notable attempts to direct creative efforts toward greater symbolic communicative power of urban space, and to embrace popular forms of daily environments, was made by Robert Venturi. In *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972), Venturi introduced the notion of communicative action

as an integral part of modern architectural practice and emphasized the continuous need to revise architecture's own elitist and self-referential language. The analysis of the meanings attached to the daily environments, according to Venturi, is accomplished through 'symbolic deconstruction' of daily built environments; for example through reference to commercial symbols such as neon lights and glitter of gambling houses and reintroduction of those elements into architecture.

Linda Hutcheon (1988:4) examines the direction taken by many contemporary artists, architects and theoreticians in their representations of the city and finds that they indicate a "postmodern ironic rethinking of history." According to Hutcheon, the legacy of 'heroic' modernism and the onslaught of homogeneous mass culture provoked changes in reflections on urban form and in social awareness. This postmodern reaction does not completely deny mass culture; it challenges this culture by asserting difference in the place of "homogeneous identity." In discussing architects/theorists Charles Jencks and Paolo Portoghesi, Hutcheon develops her ideas of contemporary postmodern architecture as a source and vehicle of cultural reflection and communication. Parodic references to the history of architecture (for example, using architectural details such as antique pillars, appropriating and blending ornaments, and inserting images into architectural patterns) textually reinstate a dialogue with the past and with the social and ideological context in which architecture is, and has been, produced and lived. "In producing parody in this way, postmodernist forms want to work toward a public discourse that would overtly eschew modernist aestheticism and hermeticism and its attendant political self-marginalization" (Hutcheon, 1988:23). Architects 'wṛite' history by re-contextualizing forms of buildings and public space in general. Eclectic groupings and juxtapositions can intimate a historical and semantic awareness on the part of the architect, and indicate a desire to return to the idea of architecture as both communication and community (Hutcheon, 1988:28).

Margrét Harðardóttir (1996:229) employed architectural representation to reveal the social function of a public building (Reykjavik City Hall, completed in 1992), and its relationship to the cultural and physical landscape of Iceland. As the architect herself puts

it: "The City Hall is clearly affected by its function as a civic focus and a token of democracy," but at the same time "the building conveys our understanding of open democracy as something free-flowing and organic, which evolves within an understood framework of rules." The complex program of the building is achieved here through symbolic architectural details such as columns rising from a lake "representing the fifteen city council members who are entrusted with the delicate task of controlling the city," through subtle spatial planning techniques that instead of providing comfortable rooms for formal receptions, opens up the interior council chamber to the observation of the passers-by in the street.

A postmodern analysis of city spaces as representations is one way in which the sociological significance of architecture can be revealed. The pragmatic goal of this kind of analysis is to use urban imagery, and the formal language of trendy commodities, to engage urban dwellers in reflection upon the spaces and places of their lives. The role of the designer is critical in this process and has begun to change. The designer is not only a purveyor of objects and services, but also an active interpreter, mediator and manipulator of the symbolic and formal language of architecture.

3.7 Summary

In the first two chapters I introduced the topic of the research – an account of a community-based design project in a small town New Brunswick – and positioned it within the broader context of discussions about design practice in urban and rural milieux. With the assertions that the built environment is an arena of diverse forms of social interaction, and that social interaction itself takes place within diverse locations and under various conditions, I discussed constructions of such concepts as 'public,' 'public space' and 'community.'

In this chapter, I discussed how the city and the country have been more often conceptualized as separate if not antagonistic spheres, and followed this with a recognition of the differences *and* the commonalities between design projects carried out

in large urban and small town or rural environments. It is the connections and mutual influences between these socio-physical environments that are continuously reshaping both city and country. Therefore an examination of existing problems and speculations about the future of built environments cannot be approached by considering either the rural areas or the cities alone.

While built environments are critical in forming people's daily existence in rural settings as much as in urban locations, I contend that daily social interaction can manifest in activities that challenge geographic or temporal borders. The range of experiences of public space, and the opportunities for fulfilment through social interaction, are highly dependent on variables such as the social status, gender, ethnicity and age of the individual, and the cultural context and physical setting in which that interaction takes place. These assertions reaffirm the important role of public space not only as a physical but also as a diverse experiential realm which is integral to quality of urban and rural life in general.

The theoretical underpinnings behind the notions of 'public' and 'public space' have an impact on people's perceptions and use of built environments, and influence the criteria for design of built environments. The Western orthodox notion of the public-private dichotomy is juxtaposed with the feminist analysis and critique of this distinction. It asserts the gendered character of public and private spaces, and reveals how the organization of the urban environment has been employed to control women. Blurring, or 'muddying' the boundaries between public and private remains an ongoing project in feminist agendas.

The recognition of 'community' as a socially constructed and highly contested phenomenon allows critical evaluation of what is considered to be a 'traditional' community, or understood as a utopian community where moral goals are set and never achieved. Within our diverse and 'impure' communities, where continuous change is inevitable, the pursuit of wholeness and perfection through social and design transformations is futile or perilous. Rather the response of designers should be to employ design strategies that embrace the fluidity of the community, identify informal practices

in spaces of everyday living, and pay closer attention to representations of built environments and their social functions.

4.0 CHAPTER 3: Design and the Designer

4.1 Cities and public space

Along with the transformations of modern history, and the growth of Western metropolitan culture, visions of the city have come to be divided into spheres of disciplinary competence. Individuals working in different disciplines and with differing philosophical stances approach the production of public space in diverse ways. The complex phenomenon of the city is often defined by architects as a depository of building styles and influences, by economists as a site for regularization of retailing practices, and by planners as a transportation node and mosaic of municipal bylaws. A single hegemonic conceptual framework does not, however, account for and recognize all the diversity and conflicting notions of urban culture, its forms and social processes. Consequently, it can be argued that no one possesses all of the knowledge and wisdom required to understand and act responsibly in this world. "We need diversity and alternative perspectives to keep alive the ongoing inquiry into ordering, disordering, and reordering that is the central enterprise of human culture" (Buchanan, 1998:15). The increasing complexity of interpretations of public life and its relationship to the built environment requires renewed attention to the dialogue between varying disciplines.

The emerging interest in, and concern over, conditions of social, cultural and material existence in contemporary built environments has prompted discussions about the social impact of urban planning and design practices. According to Bob Evans (1997:4), quite often "the outcomes of town-planning activity have been socially regressive, benefitting land and property owners and the educated and articulate middle class rather than the 'community' as a whole." One of the reasons for the inequity is the segregation of users, creators and administrators of built environments in the design process. The users are shut out of what are seen as "exclusive and specialized debates about architecture." This has meant that architects, planners, landscape designers and other professionals involved in this political issue fail to realize that power relations

extend "between those who create space on their own terms and those who are forced to inhabit it" (Fat, 1998:80). This disciplinary exclusivity is a consequence of the industrial revolution when "a separation of designing from making" was encouraged (Buchanan, 1995:34).[8] At the same time, design as a newly emerging discipline became separated from the intellectual and fine arts, leaving it without an established theoretical foundation of its own. One of the results of a socio-economic shift taking place during the early part of the twentieth century, according to Richard Buchanan (1995:34), was that design became fragmented into "specializations of different types of production, leaving its connection with other human enterprises and bodies of knowledge vague and uncertain."

The industrial revolution brought an explosion of new urban construction to Europe and America, introducing planning as a mode of rationalized urban development. The birth of the planning mentality meant a new spatial order in American cities, but as Michael Dear (1995:32) notes, "planning documents quickly zeroed-in on the minute details of the built environment," and a "concern with physical detail was increasingly abstracted from the motives and conflict that led to the production of the built environment."

If planners were gradually retreating into technicalities of their own making, the architects codified principles of modernist design under a progressivist school of "international design." Gottdiener (1997:31) maintains that "Virtually every downtown center of every major city across the globe surrendered to the geometric rectangular boxes of high-rise buildings advocated by Le Corbusier"[9]. Le Corbusier's vision of the city was based on the idea of the community organized around a single power centre. Though he assumed that centralization would lead to greater efficiency and democracy in community life, in fact centralization undermines the social and political complexities of the urban society. The power implications of centralized control made the principles and forms of Le Corbusier's architecture attractive to, among others, those aiming to carry out totalitarian agendas (for example, the Nazi and Stalinist regimes).[10]

The endless sprawl of suburbia and a proliferation of uniform apartment buildings surrounded by parking lots can be seen in virtually every North American city. These

contemporary manifestations of modernist ideals can be identified more easily with the mindless manufacturing of space than with the realization of humanist ideals or more contemporary utopian conceptions.[11]

A prominent theme that brought the very topic of the built environment into contemporary theoretical debates was the commodification of the everyday environment and, in particular, of public space. In the 1920s, under the influence of the twin forces of mass media and commodification, "material public space" was significantly transformed. Both private and public spaces were replaced by the "thoroughly commodified spaces of consumption that now exist everywhere, including within the home." To Gottdiener (1997:142), spaces of public communion such as malls and amusement parks allow personal self-expression "only within the constraint of consumer identity" and exist in a very narrow context of consumption. Such commercialization of the public environment combines with a refined exercise of power and is expressed in the commercial purveyors' ability to control and restrict access to the spaces without creating an atmosphere of hostility.

One of the conceptions of urban space was a nostalgic model which presented an alternative vision to the progressivist-totalitarian models. It highlighted the adverse effects on society of industrial development during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. The nostalgic model established an anti-urban 'garden city' that professed to appease yearnings for small scale towns and traditional family values of the past.[12]

Identifying the city or even a community with a singular pre-determined idea of what constitutes a 'healthy organism' may bring several troubling consequences. The first problem is that this conceptualization can lead to an over-reliance on physical transformations in urban environments to effect positive social change. Examples of such practices in the past have included destruction of the social and historical heritage of cities in the name of slum clearance, and more recently, contemporary residential design reflecting obsessions with safety that result in the proliferation of gated, secured suburban divisions. Another problem is that the pursuit of a single ideal implies that society should

follow one pattern of development. This perspective often means that individuals who do not fit the normative ideal (whether this is based on race, physical or mental ability, or ideology) are either excluded from consideration or are regarded as social problems, and that important physical constraints may be overlooked. Nevertheless, the maintenance of stable social relations, paired with an adoration of rural landscape and lifestyle, remain influential criteria for some contemporary planning.

Many critics highlight the ways in which city centres are being redeveloped as gentrified environments reflecting 'themed' and aestheticised versions of the past in the form of enclosed and commercialized districts (Davis, 1992; Sorkin, 1992). These centres are "dominated by large retail and leisure chains, and many 'undesirable social groups' are purposefully excluded to maximize consumption and profit" (Graham, 1997:42). 'Undesirables' may be excluded, but others exclude themselves as a result of cultural beliefs and actions. Many of us have experienced the devastating feelings of estrangement from one's surroundings engendered in such places as shopping malls, large hotels and transit points - places controlled by computer networks and personal credit card identification. These places of "supermodernity" erase senses of real communication and memory. The individual becomes a passenger, customer or driver who is "possessed" by the "passive joys of identity-loss, and the more active pleasure of role-playing" (Augé, 1995:103). These experiences have differential gender implications.

As Elizabeth Wilson notes, since the nineteenth century, 'otherness' ("women and children, along with other disruptive elements - the working class, the poor, and minorities") has been physically and symbolically excluded from city life through town-planning. This has changed cities "almost beyond recognition" (Wilson, 1997:281). Saskia Sassen, in her interdisciplinary work, reveals how city dwellers, defined by gender, income, ethnicity or social status, may become amalgamated as 'others,' and excluded from the power centres of contemporary cities. Sassen's (1996:184) aim is to "valorize components of the economy" which largely rest on the labour of women and immigrants and are situated in corporate urban centers. The culture of urban authority represents precision and expertise, and at the same time, is exclusive in this representation. It is

manifest in dense conglomerations of "tall buildings in major downtowns" while devaluing and collapsing into "amorphous otherness" everything and everyone that does not fit the criteria of the dominant "middle class." Sassen (1996:193-7) suggests the unequivocal relation between institutional practices and the form of the city can be changed by "re-inscribing" the buildings and sites, by allowing individuals or groups such as clients or inhabitants of particular areas to have an impact on how architectural spaces are created and used. The blurring of boundaries might lead to the creation of spaces that reflect diverse social relations.

Urban reality is being transformed by incremental changes in technology. The penetration of digital communication modes, surveillance systems and financial networks into daily life have contributed to a blurring of the boundaries between such notions as the centre and periphery, inside and outside, and representation and reality. There is also a shift in the way we see the world as this technology blurs the distinction between the natural and the artificial. The categories merge into a continuous field that is marked by differences in intensity of experience. The important question that is asked by many is: "what are the implications for human emotional experience of these new forms of technology and the various 'hyperrealities' they spawn?" (Williams, 1998:120) It can be argued that new forms of emotional intimacy, sharing and meaning are beginning to open up as a consequence of these technological developments. "The computer network provides opportunities to get together with considerable personal intimacy and proximity without the physical limitations of geography, time zones or conspicuous social status" (Williams, 1998:124). Though the "intrusion of commerce and sophisticated technology into every crevice of daily life can hardly be considered cause for comfort, it is also the case that the built representations of postmodern society are no longer charged so heavily with dichotomous gender stereotypes" (Ockman, 1996:208). When the virtual and the technological assert themselves in the built environment, renewed attention should be paid to the transformations of physical forms and the meanings associated with these forms.

4.2 The relationship between modern and postmodern space - establishing constructive dialogue

The imposition of modernist order on the diversity and difference that is inherent to the life of the city has created a deep sense of crisis, and has prompted "the collapse of our mental constructs" (Healey, 1995:6). The social space - once conceptualized as ordered through functional hierarchies and divided into compartments of disciplinary responsibilities, and organized through endless inventories of specific objects such as houses, roads, squares, suburban districts and industrial parks - now appears to float away from the dominating modernist mode of control. There is a promise of new understandings of how to navigate the fluid and complex urban environment if we move away from an emphasis on 'objects' and 'problem solutions' toward a position that identifies networks, sees the links between social, material and technological realms, and recognizes the political nature of such environments and the complex human values involved in their conception, perception and their use.

The modern and postmodern views of the city are not just conceptions of form, or even of social order. To Patsy Healey (1995:256) "they embody distinctive systems of meaning, within which prioritizing certain relations makes sense, and particular attributes of form have value." Varying visions of urban phenomena produce different conceptualizations of socio-spatial relations, different ways to view issues and problems, and varying approaches to designing and implementing transformations. Even the language that is used to describe the range of socio-spatial priorities and values is different. Consequently, Healey stresses the necessity for a "dialogue *between* systems of meaning."

While Michael Dear may be quite accurate that the perception of crisis lies partly in the constructs of the city, constructs that are of our own making, we shouldn't forget that the material forms of modernization are present and still function in our lives while we try to make the switch to more dynamic and reflective modes of theorizing the city. Edward Soja (1996:20) argues that "we must understand the new urbanization and

urbanism without discarding our older understanding" because the new postmodern patterns of urbanization, the social processes and spatial forms "are being overlain on the old and articulated with them in increasingly complex ways."

By discussing how we or others did or do perceive the spaces we inhabit - in various situations and differing circumstances - we can increase our ability to relate our intellectual responses to perceiving the environment with the practical action we take within it. I will now turn to a more substantive examination of the role of design and designer.

4.3 The designer's role

For much of human history, communities, along with the relational networks and built networks that accompanied them, formed and transformed without professional intervention. Among the first professional creators to become involved in the formation of the physical and cultural milieu of the community were architects. With the growing complexity of modern environments, that in the Western world followed the industrial revolution, a broader range of professions became involved in the conceptualization, production and maintenance of built environments under the general rubric of design.

My aim here is to identify general dimensions for the notion of the designer as an individual whose work involves and embraces ideas and methods from many professional fields. Several historical paradigms have signified the professional activity and formed the historical context for current discussions about the professional competence and the role of the designer in society. I suggest these would include: the designer as prophet, as listener, as artist and as engineer. Identifying initial values which ground ideas in design can help to explain how different professional values and paradigms of practice have been encouraged or directed. According to Richard Buchanan (1995:29), the principles of design are more or less established historically, yet the discipline of design is in a process of formation and continuous change.

4.3.1 The designer as listener and participant

When approaching the idea of the designer as a participant and collaborator who gains the necessary means for creative intervention by listening to the client, the example of British community planning of the 1970s and 1980s comes immediately to mind (see Blowers and Evans, 1997). However, important precedents for setting criteria for architectural design that "must be the result of the most positive information provided by the interested persons, and discussed in their presence" can be traced back as far as Louis Bruyère's (see Collins, 1998:228 on Bruyère) *Studies Relative to the Art of Construction* (1823). The ideals of functionalist architecture of the nineteenth century also influenced theorist Julien Guadet (1834-1908). He recognized the practical experience and talent of the architect as important aspects of creative process, but at the same time asserted that it was a client's or public authority's duty to give the expression of the requirements of the commissioned building. Thus, Guadet did not regard the architect as a social reformer, but only as an instrument of social reform (Collins, 1998:228-9).

4.3.2 The designer as social reformer and prophet

The first decades of the twentieth century were marked by a re-emergence of the notion of architecture as a tool for social and organizational improvements. The architect was a visionary who created a new architecture by changing the public's way of life (Collins, 1998:229). Le Corbusier and Wright used their work to guide and persuade the somewhat less articulate and informed public about their modernist vision.

Le Corbusier's vision for the "Contemporary City" provides an example of such designing. The plan took the form of a series of exquisite towers, geometrically arranged in, and surrounded by, a park. Still classical in its conception, the geometrical city, with plenty of open space and clean air, was to replace all the exhausted, outmoded and haphazard arrangements of the urban past. The theoretical basis for Le Corbusier's conception was twofold: the city seen as a rational "machine for living," and the city as a

carrier of spiritual ideas of unity, progress and social harmony (Turner, 1977:14-41).

4.3.3 The designer as engineer and technician

"When the origins of design are traced to the Industrial Revolution, the [design] principle lies in the power of individuals to control their surroundings, satisfy needs and desires, and influence social life through mechanization and technology" (Buchanan, 1995:47). In the nineteenth century, demand was generated for the invention of new materials and technologies and the development of advanced strategies to increase the productivity of manufacturing systems. Technical specialists played the dominant role in meeting the design needs of the population during the first century of the industrial revolution.

Architects reflected technological and industrial progress through the use of lean geometric forms in buildings, supposedly resulting from meticulous attention to issues of planning and construction (Collins, 1998:224). Their professed aim was to reduce the designed objects and environments to their function. The designer, as technician, was meant to create optimal conditions for efficient work and movement within the urban spaces.[13]

The division of labour that was brought on by the industrial revolution initially heightened awareness of the designer's role as engineer and technical specialist, but eventually pushed the profession into the narrow domain of styling, of responsibility for the sensory appeal of the product (Buchanan, 1995:8). The engineer, in this context, often becomes entirely responsible for the structural and functional qualities of the product, the social worker or a bureaucrat for the communication strategies directed at the potential users, and the advertising agency for the analysis of market needs.

Counter to the forces that created demand for, and encouraged specialization of, professional knowledge in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there were voices that, while championing the industrial revolution, envisioned a different, integrative future for the design profession. Walter Gropius, the initiator of the Bauhaus school of

design, was among the first to recognize that design can and should span the gulf between idealism and reality, and become the new "liberal art of technological culture" (Buchanan, 1995:35). The 'new art of design' was supposed to be grounded in human creativity and all forms of production, and supported by a cultural environment influenced by engineering, technology and commerce. Principles and ideas of the Bauhaus continue to influence art, design and cultural theory and production to this day, with the more recent integrative focus for design practice.

4.4 Reconsidering the role of the designer in daily professional practice

The gulf between the definitions for 'designer' and 'design practice' and their current referents requires careful analysis and critique. This analysis can provide us with valuable insights into the principles of design practice, and establish directions the practice should take in the future. The place where we find the discrepancies between the 'ideal cases' and 'messy everyday practices' can become a critical middle ground, where reflective theorizing about design's role in society can take place.

Within the dominant tendency of modern society to fragment built environments into compartments where particular functions are performed, the professional plays a central part in creating social demand for expert knowledge and in maintaining the mechanisms of continuous specialization in daily practice. For example, architects are responsible for architectural space, planners claim the municipal regions, and economists delineate as their 'turf' the economic spaces. Each of these professional areas has developed, through the years, its own principles and definitions of professional practice.

Urban planning and policy was heavily influenced by the positivist theories of urban development that emerged during the 1950s and 1960s. The main goals of planners were social and economic modernization and improvement of the "locational efficiency of cities and urban regions" (Graham, 1997:34). Classical town planning, as it was described by the planning profession in the 1950s, can be defined as "the art and science of ordering the use of land and the character and siting of buildings and communication

routes so as to secure the maximum practicable degree of economy, convenience and beauty" (Keeble, 1952:9). The theory was employed to develop optimal urban systems based on 'sound science,' and in practice those systems were implemented in the form of a proliferation of standard models. Within the last few decades, the planning profession has moved from making many grandiose reformatory claims toward identifying their role with aims "to oversee the legislative process and mediate between competing interests" within the public and private sectors (Evans and Rydin, 1997:58).

The complexity of activities in the design profession and changing interpretations of the specific roles of designers, architects, planners and other professionals make the act of self determination a problematic task for many. As Mark Cousins (1996:16) suggests, "it is not possible to explain simply architectural design." He maintains that the creative aspect of professional activity makes it difficult for the architect to relate his or her work to the 'outsider.' Talking about a project is much like trying to relate a dream to a baffled listener. Presenting information from a recent professional survey, Evans argues that "even town planners themselves, when asked, are unable to specify precisely what skills they possess" (Evans, 1997:3). It is rather troubling that designers are quite often not prepared to communicate their creative impulses to the users of their designs, and further, that they often consciously let this inability create an aura of exclusiveness about their work.

As many critically thinking designers, theorists and architects (Buchanan, 1998; Rowe, 1996; Larson, 1996) agree, there is a palpable sense of crisis among design professionals - a concern over the well-being of the profession, or at least over the survival of the profession as we know it. Identification of problems of self-definition might encourage critical discussion among professionals and allow for the development, within the field of design, of constructive communicative paradigms that counter the exclusivity of past practices.

The changes experienced in contemporary Western urban environments over the past several decades - gentrification, suburban sprawl, physical and social fragmentation of the urban regions, their growing cultural and physical diversity - have been identified

as dominant developmental trends. Searching for a narrative about the city and its economy "that includes rather than evicts" marginal economies and their representations in the city's physical form, political economist Saskia Sassen (1996) establishes an interdisciplinary dialogue on the subject of race, gender and representation in the city. In so doing, she provides us with an example of theorizing in the critical space in between disciplines, where new knowledge and directions for constructive action can be fostered.

4.5 The designer within a diverse value system

Although designers of built environments have often been given narrow professional mandates, limited to formal styling and administrative duties, the strength of the design is embedded in skillful integration of technical and engineering knowledge, aesthetic sense and creativity, social reflexivity, and skills of communication.

Much confusion and uncertainty about the profession stems from the contested nature of design values and principles. Many design theorists, however, recognize the fluidity and diversity of design as integral to broader social processes. Buchanan (1995:48) asserts that design comes "into existence within the competitive organization of production, distribution, and consumption." Designers not only represent diverse social values and agendas, but also exercise a considerable degree of power *through* design.

For example, in the planning profession, and British town planning in particular, the exercise of professional power was associated with some notion of reform (Evans, 1997:2). Reflecting on his own planning experience, which is London based, Bob Colenutt (1997:107) recognizes that planning can make a difference in everyday life, and that "planning decisions can create huge increases in land values without a brick being laid," because in densely populated areas the "competition for land and property is intense." Yet, he notes that according to community perception, changes in local environments are seen as caused by economic factors and local politics or cultural changes, rather than by planning decisions.

Margrét Harðardóttir (1996:235) remarks that architecture is very much

influenced by other factors in local 'environments.' Taking a realistic look at her profession, she asserts that architectural design and the building industry in general reflect "the cultural state of the society in which we live." The profession and industry are often controlled by the crude reality of budgets, bureaucratic regulations, and the changing political and social climate. To Harðardóttir, this presents challenges, "theory is put to the test," and successful work requires "flexibility in both thinking and operation."

In addition, a number of feminist theorists have also pointed out that throughout the course of urban development, architectural critics and historians have continued to place artistic and social value on buildings not as places, but as isolated objects of art. However, as places, their significance and definition is established through the complex process of habitation (Friedman, 1996:217). From a feminist perspective, architectural design as the creation of discrete aesthetic objects is problematic because this approach neglects or evades the fact that gender divisions and inequalities are perpetuated by male-dominated architectural values of space ordering. Further, feminists maintain that architectural design is not a neutral aesthetic phenomenon. It always embodies certain values of the dominant powers within the society.

4.6 Responsibilities of the designer

Designing is a communicative act involving a responsibility to take into account the cultural and social impact of professional practice. "Responsible designers become active in the definition of their own role, and of the paradigms within which they operate" (Frascara, 1997:31). This also means that the needs of the client and overall social responsibility have to be considered within a continuous reflexive practice. An important step toward realizing those goals is the recognition that the designer is part of the environment and the society for which she or he designs. Therefore, rather than imposing knowledge and ethics, the designer exchanges and asserts in a process of negotiation with clients and the public.

Both the process and the results of designing should be open for debate and public

questioning. In turn, designers should exercise their persuasiveness "in dealing with others and find concrete techniques for assessing the many perspectives from which products are viewed by clients, manufacturers, business and other technical experts, and potential users" (Buchanan, 1995:25-6). The designer's responsibilities in terms of communication extend beyond possessing and relating knowledge of product-user relations, to the complex task of establishing links between the initial design idea and the selection of instruments through which such ideas can be strengthened and realized (Frascara, 1997:5). For effective communication to take place "the designer must speak the language of the client." As Jorge Frascara (1997:11) asserts, this language is quite often verbal, and not, as is familiar to the designer, visual language. The ability to articulate the idea and rationale of the design project in a language accessible to users and other involved professionals remains an "essential element in the designer's task."

One of the critical steps toward ensuring responsible design practice is the development of "design performance-evaluating criteria" (Frascara, 1997:22). Evaluation of performance and development of further transformation strategies for the designed products, information and environments should become integral parts of the designer's work. This implies that a considerable shift in design practice should take place. The design work embodied in the object (whether it is a day-care centre or a desk lamp) has to be reconsidered as work undertaken toward meeting certain performance criteria - work that would be evaluated by its continuous impact on the user and the environment.

To adopt the position of an informed designer one must pursue a deeper understanding and appreciation of the cultural issues and practices that converge in the body of the contemporary built environment. One of our valuable resources of creativity and skill is our ability to listen and learn from those for whom we design (see Frascara, 1999). In the urban context, we should not forget that public space is the representation of a "public, as a living, acting, and self-determining community" (Torre, 1996:249). The community is manifested in the production of its own space. The architectural design contributes to that expression, but only in part. Only by facing the political content of the production of an architectural design and such aspects as "the territories of gender, the

relationship between domestic and work, the form of sustainability or the spatiality of social demarcation" is the designer enabled to embrace the creation of environments as community architecture (Till, 1998:68).

Expansion of the scope of the designer's responsibilities does not mean that many traditional disciplinary skills and artistic imagination would become obsolete to the designer of urban spaces, images or products. What it does suggest is that the range of issues relevant to a designer's professional competence requires serious scrutiny and expansion. The deconstruction of the status of the designer as an external observer provides operational opportunities to transcend orthodox modes of practice in everyday design. The designer's vision is no longer seen to exist as an unquestionable truth, but rather as a creative imagination and personal vision that is historically situated and "infused into a rhetorical art of communication and persuasion" (Buchanan, 1995:27).

4.7 'Design practice' redefined

Traditionally, design histories identified "their subject matter as the history of objects, or the careers of individual designers who have influenced society, or the development of the technical means and processes of a specialized branch of design practice such as graphic design, industrial design, or engineering, or the influence of broad cultural ideas on the practice of all of the fine and useful arts" (Buchanan, 1995:24). A renewed understanding of the designer's role in society will depend on reinforcing a conception of design practice as socially responsible and effective.

Recent discussions on design issues within various professional circles support the idea that the scope of design practice should be broadened. Professional design in particular is a socially constructed and constituted phenomenon that is a part of the larger creative design sphere (see Margolin, 1995). An opening of the boundaries of design fields should allow for various contributions and modes and forms of designing: professional and non-professional, civic and state, and private and independent design. In addition, designers should strengthen their comprehension of the "dynamics of individual

and social behaviour well enough to work efficiently and effectively in interdisciplinary teams" (Frascara, 1999:121). This requires that design practitioners and theorists seek some common understanding of the social and cultural issues at stake, and deepen their awareness of contemporary intellectual discourses and research methods that can contribute to bringing design, the humanities and social sciences together.

In order to follow and refine such a direction in professional and intellectual practice, the designer must identify the ontological, epistemological and methodological aspects embedded in their theoretical orientation. Questions that could be asked in this context include: Whose interests are represented in the project? How are the results of the research or the physical changes to an environment going to have an impact on various parties that share the common urban realm? Questions could also extend beyond the immediate concerns of the designer. For example: What will be the impact on future transformations of decisions made today?

Redefinition of design action paradigms is one of the central epistemological tasks that designers are confronting as they face social and technological transformations. This brings us back to the idea that design is undergoing a necessary redefinition and change in orientation: away from seeing design as a *product* oriented activity and toward understanding that it is a creative communicative action oriented toward design of the *process*. For example, in the design of public spaces, part of the designer's efforts would be directed toward "taking the sensory cues of our experience and sculpting them into a comprehensive form" (Gottdiener, 1997:131). We can distinguish several stages in such design process: the development of the initial concept, planning, modeling, creation of prototypes, implementation and evaluation of the design intervention, and development of further transformations extending beyond the immediate life of the project.

4.8 Integration of sensitivity of expression with analytical aspects of design

Design language is both functional and emotional. Its function is to fulfill needs of communication between individuals through designed environments, objects or images.

Sensitivity in expression, visual invention and formal skills such as dexterity are important dimensions of designers' work, but the majority recognize that there is more to design than mere styling. "The problem is how to accommodate sensitivity to expression with the intellectual and analytical issues belonging to communication, construction, strategic planning, and systemic integration" (Buchanan, 1995:45). Here formal expression should be integrated with other genuine design concerns in a way that function and expression would be manifest through each other, producing an integrative experience that combines aesthetic, social and technical aspects. To Merrill Elam (1996:198) this experience in architectural practice is a "cumulative personal experience." It feeds intuition and offers "the link between the phenomenal and the deductive."

Can the designer be "aesthetically daring and yet scrupulously ethical" in his or her work and still "produce vital and captivating designs"? (Donald, 1997:200) The challenge lies in making conscientious revisions to the intentions and methods of work while not precluding the creation of humane, livable and beautiful environments. According to Jorge Frascara (1997:11-4), "the use of systematic approaches to define the content and form" of a design does not necessarily imply that the results will be predictable or uninteresting. He maintains that there cannot be separation between function and aesthetics in design, because "aesthetics is one of the functions of design."

4.9 Social awareness and reflexivity in design practice

Recognition of the diversity and fluidity of the built environment and its relatedness to emotional reactions demands from designers a radically new approach to creative transformations of living public space if they are to realize its potential to offer freedom and autonomy to all individuals and groups (Pile, 1996:283). Design operates in a politically contested terrain of 'public interest.' A challenging direction in design is to acknowledge marginality in social life and the formal representation of the city. Of course, including marginality in urban built environments is not a panacea for social problems, but it does materialize and make visible social diversity. It therefore creates

opportunities for marginal groups' self-determination and for transformations within society.

Design choices are complex expressions reflecting the personal preferences of the designer and the social and political circumstances that influence his or her decision making. While design involves certain structural and technological aspects that can be more objectively evaluated, architectural designs cannot produce entirely predictable social responses from their users. Resigning our expectations of deterministic social consequences from architectural design we can look forward to seeing its capacity exercised to produce critical social commentary where the "poetics of political imagination might be effectively allied to a pragmatics of architecture and design." Architecture, for example, would have "a critical power of remembering in grasping urban space as historically and temporally layered; and an imagination that combines aesthetics and ethics in formulating possible changes to the fabric of the city" (Donald, 1997:198). The critical architectural practice would acknowledge the city as a continuous process which endures contradictory political, environmental and cultural influences (Kanes Weisman, 1996: 277).

This reflexivity involves a holistic approach to design. The need to embrace new models of reflection on urban processes has been voiced by many social theorists and practitioners. Undoubtedly, the conception of knowledge as the designated domain of experts and professionals should be exposed to serious scrutiny. When discussing urban planning issues, Bob Evans and Yvonne Rydin (1997:68) stress the need for planners "to recognize their position alongside other professions and groups within civil society. They need to be part, but only part, of an holistic approach to policy."

The notion of holistic design introduces and encourages academic and theoretical discussion about the discipline as a place where "theory and practice meet for productive purposes" (Buchanan and Margolin, 1995:xxv). When designers open doors for dialogue about their discipline to 'outsiders,' they challenge the exclusiveness of the voice that speaks for design in contemporary culture. Though such debate can be threatening to some, broadening the discussion about design's cultural significance and its role in

contemporary society also challenges claims of exclusivity by other disciplines to cultural, economic and social realms. Superimposition of various disciplines in order to address particular projects or problems could, according to Bernd Meurer (1997:126), "spawn a new hybrid category of design activity, which will emancipate itself from traditional disciplinary concepts" and "would be equally oriented toward research and practice, albeit in a novel way."

The debates and discussions on the nature of design practice and the role of the designer are all relevant to the case study that forms the focus of this dissertation project. As the study reveals, theoretical ideals are often difficult to realize in practice because of the complexity of social practices that are often out of the control of the designer.

4.10 The designer's role and the case study

In order to address and further discuss the social impact of the designer's work, I will in the following chapters present a detailed account of a case study focussing on the development of a public facility in the town of Sackville. In this study I address the particular role of the architect and other groups and individuals involved in the development of the Civic Centre facility. As I adopt the notion of design as a holistic activity evolving within diverse contexts, I pay particular attention to the specific social and cultural setting influencing the development and outcomes of the project.

The previous exploration of the theme of design of built environments, and especially design of public spaces, has largely focussed on examples of large urban projects located in metropolitan areas. However, the Civic Centre project I am presenting in this study is located in a small town. I recognize that there are significant differences between this research setting and a larger urban milieu. Still, I submit that my case illustrates with clarity the problems and issues of the community's relation to public interaction and public space, and informs debates about the social responsibility of the designer involved in transforming the built environment. Further, my study is relevant to the broader urban design context and the context of design practice.

The setting of my study contains features of modern existence and communal attachments characteristic to various degrees of both urban and rural environments. Many visitors and some local residents perceive Sackville as the ideal of a traditional Maritime town. This "concrete collectivity of people in a geographic location" is characterized by strong communal ties and the dominance of parochial spaces where residents socialize among those they usually know (Allen and Dillman, 1994:32). The town also accommodates some elements of the public realm: spaces and occasions for visitors, students and town residents to mingle side by side. One of the main factors contributing to the urban character of living is the presence of the University with its dynamic community of students, professors and regular visitors. If the stream of summer tourists fills the town during the months of July and August, the University hosts many events and conferences that attract out-of-towners year round. Further, more and more professionals are also choosing to become residents of this picturesque town. They continue to lead an essentially urban lifestyle by making frequent trips or commuting daily to the nearby city of Moncton for work, shopping and entertainment.

My study reveals that this community is undergoing a complex process of change and must face and adapt to urbanizing ways of life. Its once strong role as a regional hub has been declining for several decades. If we agree that rural life is not static and that such a place as Sackville has not "already achieved historical identity", adaptation to new conditions should be seen as a part of a continuous process and not as a crisis (Wright, 1998:22). I suggest that this town has to open itself up to changing employment patterns and ways of socializing. Its public spaces should reflect these changes toward adjusting to new conditions in the region, accommodating a multiplicity of lifestyles and orientations, and helping the town survive economically and culturally.

However, not every resident sees Sackville as an urbanizing, suburban bedroom or satellite ex-urban community. Many townies feel very protective of the 'old ways' of living and of the 'original' character of the town. They view current changes in their environment as a threat - destructive forces of urbanization that will take away much of what has been valued in the lives of local residents for generations.

The current social atmosphere in Sackville is marked by a search for balances between public, private and communal; and between openness to change and urbanization, and preservation of the 'traditional' character of the local community. Striking and maintaining these balances is one of the paramount problems and tasks shared by many evolving smaller communities located in rural areas. Many spaces in Sackville exist on a continuum between private and public, between private and parochial, or between parochial and public. Just what kind of space particular places are or represent is the subject of continuous debate in town. The Civic Centre project was no exception in this regard. The design of the facility vividly illustrated the existing tensions within the community, various points of view and visions of what kind of social interaction should be encouraged, and, more generally, what kind of town residents aspire to live in. Through this public development many of the town's issues came to light and were articulated with renewed clarity by various participants and groups.

This study was particularly instrumental in revealing the role and extent of influence of the designer in shaping the character of communal life and the public built environments. The criteria for evaluating the principles of design practice employed included an assessment of how the designer was able to adhere to historically established criteria for design practice such as professional rigour, technical knowledge, skills of communication and collaboration; and an assessment of how the designer was able to adapt these principles to the specific social and cultural setting or, in other words, to the 'messy everyday practice.' Ultimately, the social impact of the designer's involvement was explored in relation to whether and how the design initiative has encouraged positive changes in the community and its environment.

The designer of the Sackville Civic Centre project faced a challenging task of introducing a public amenity to a community where the overwhelming majority of residents were directly affected by the development. The relative scale of the project elevated the expectations and anxieties of the town residents to unprecedented levels. In this small and relatively cohesive community where face-to-face contact is a dominant mode of communication, the social and political pressures to produce the 'best civic

centre money can buy' were immense.

This level of intimacy is not always the case in urban design projects. Identifying and maintaining continuous contact with potential users of public amenities and spaces often poses different kinds of problems. Larger scale, fluid and unpredictable urban social milieux where space use changes more rapidly and users are more diverse, make the issues and problems with the design project more elusive than in smaller communities. Still, at the level of everyday practice, designers and planners in many urban projects work with particular clients, funding organizations, municipal government representatives and user group representatives. However arbitrary or selective these groups are, they usually become the power players in the decision making process. One of the designer's roles, in both larger urban and smaller community settings, is to mediate between these design participants. The designer should also contribute a design that goes beyond mediation towards further qualitative transformations to the socio-physical setting, and representation of the broader public good.

As in many urban developmental projects, conflicting opinions about the Sackville initiative arose and came to epitomize community power struggles. These various visions represented something more than internal disagreements about the form and content of the Civic Centre. They reflected differing attitudes toward public space and its catalytic role in a community's future. The architect had to perform a difficult balancing act, participating in deciding whose interests the publicly funded amenity should reflect. This complex struggle between town residents, the local government and project leaders extended beyond the immediate town setting to include broader regional political and economic contexts, making this case study of the Sackville experience relevant to the more abstract issues surrounding urban design projects, that the previous discussion illustrated.

5.0 CHAPTER 4: Methodological approach

5.1 Boundaries of the case

The starting point in the development of a methodological approach for my dissertation was the identification of initial boundaries for the case. I expected that the research materials gathered and generated in this case study would be principal data sources for dissertation arguments. This information would feed the discussion of the critical aspects and conditions of public life, and, through analysis of design practice, the relationships of these factors to the built environment. At the outset of the study I realized that focussing on the Civic Centre project, the activities of the Board of Directors from 1996 to 2001, and the project's impact on the town of Sackville, would mean setting somewhat artificial boundaries for the case. Establishing these geographic and temporal boundaries helped me focus on the main research theme, and identify instances where I was required to step beyond the immediate case analysis in order to gain a contextual understanding of the problems and issues at hand.

5.2 Criteria for choosing the case

I arrived in Sackville with formed notions that public interaction has social value, and that the public realm is affected considerably by social conditions and the spatial-design aspects of the environments within which communities reside. These assumptions were based on my experiences in urban design projects, work with non-profit organizations and graduate studies at university.

While living in Sackville I gained unique opportunities to observe and experience local social dynamics, and to take an active role in the life of the town. As a result I have achieved a fair understanding of the values and interests of members of this community. My research was more manageable as I was approaching it holistically and, rather than emphasizing isolated facts, I focussed on interconnected relationships and social

processes. Limiting my inquiry to one case, I was able to grasp certain subtleties and intricacies of the complex social situation which would have been obscured if I had instead undertaken a survey method.

While the Civic Centre project has a number of advantages as a case study, an important factor in my choosing the project was the practical reality of my living situation. In late November 1998, while continuing my doctoral studies at the University of Alberta, I moved to Sackville with my family. I knew that this town had become my home. I was anxious at the beginning, not knowing if I would have an opportunity to get involved in a local design project and continue my dissertation research. Fortunately, the town's people had for a few years been nursing the idea of building a community centre, and that had recently evolved into the Tantramar Regional Civic Centre project which would become one of the major undertakings for the community of 5,400 residents.

This Civic Centre project is not a unique undertaking among publically funded civic projects in the Maritimes and across the country. In Canada, small towns and larger cities have been competing for public funds and building public facilities incorporating indoor and outdoor ice rinks since the 1930s (Winder, 1998). The Sackville case can be identified as critical among other projects because it highlights important relationships between architects, the community, local government and the provincial government.

The case is also valuable because the community participating in the project has qualities that are significant to successful public space design initiatives. The town is home to many public organizations that influence people's lives. These include committees and public boards that address or promote among other things policing, gardening, cultural programs, and amateur sports. Sackville has a strong history of volunteer participation and an impressive number of community grass roots leaders whose political and organizational skills enable them to achieve specific goals. (Volunteers from 27 local groups were recognized for their dedication to the community during the Volunteer Recognition Night held in March of 2000.) Further, one only needs to open the local weekly newspaper to see that the residents of Sackville take public initiatives seriously and do not shy away from expressing their opinions on public events

and decisions.

By examining the relationship between Sackville's built environment and the community's strategies toward transforming it, I gained opportunities to shift my research focus between various levels of abstraction: from practical issues such as the design of a community ice rink, to addressing the role of the Provincial government in the processes of community based initiatives, to examining principles and features of collaborative design.

5.3 Purpose of the research

As I identified earlier, the purpose of my research in this case study was twofold. Throughout my research I was balancing theoretical and substantive objectives. On one hand, my aim was to become an effective participant in the design project and employ my experience as a designer, researcher and community activist toward a practical goal - the development and construction of a community centre in town. In this respect I aimed to grasp the complexity of the case, understand the phenomenon from inside and, through empirically sound accounts, generate knowledge that was action and goal oriented. On the other hand, while reflecting on the dynamics of the project - social situations (discussions at Board meetings, processes of political negotiations), and the cultural and social rules that shape these situations - I attempted to capture an insider's perspective on patterns within which a design process takes place. The primary application of this action oriented knowledge was to empower and help residents achieve their goals of transforming their environment and navigating in complex social networks toward mutually negotiated results (Flick, 1998).

Two years' involvement in the life of the town enabled me to discuss *why* certain outcomes occurred during the course of the project, rather than just find out *what* the outcomes were. I used practical knowledge gained as a reference toward contextualized reflection on the design process and the social responsibilities of designers. The social situation explored in my research was not a 'given' reality. Rather, it was constructed by

people involved in the project, and by my own influence as a researcher and member of the design team. Moving away from generating knowledge that is prescriptive and often results in the creation of stagnant criteria for 'good' design, I favoured an exploration of the contradictory and complex nature of the design process. This approach enabled me to suggest possible structural mappings and communicative means that, rather than advocating a 'right' way of designing, pointed to strategies for the evaluation and assessment of specific design situations in relation to their social effects.

5.4 My role and perspective as a participant and researcher

Participation and research agendas were equally important aspects of the study. They were complementary motivations in this knowledge generating endeavour, as my own identity in the project oscillated between that of designer, Sackville resident, volunteer community activist and researcher. Acknowledging that the researcher plays a significant role in the production and interpretation of data in such a complex situation, I also recognized that there was the potential danger of becoming absorbed by the field and adopting a situated perspective unreflexively (Flick, 1998:146). Therefore it was important to try to adopt various points of view, address conflicting ideas and discourses, and make a detailed examination of my own role in the project as explicit and transparent as possible.

Epistemology is a political process no matter how detached or how involved the researcher chooses to become in relation to her study environment and subjects. Rather than seeking to achieve the researcher's analytical "distance" from the case, I embraced my complex personal position within the research, and viewed it as a guide toward personal and professional, sociological and design insight.

I came from the 'old world' as an adult to live and continue my education in Canada. The fact that I have spent a significant part of my life geographically and culturally far away from my current context continues to enable me to reflect upon my present experiences in a more comparative and reflective way. Also, more recently,

coming to live and work on my research in a small community after living in big cities for my whole life has made me especially sensitive to the experiences of small community living. Further, the conscious choice to conduct the study within my immediate living environment highlighted my own perspective as a researcher. Sackville as a place and community had become an important part of my family's life. It affected me daily, and was in turn affected by my own actions. My personal history and experiences have given me unique and complex perspectives on social and design issues in this place. As a result of these varying perspectives I was able to build a convincing and balanced argument that was context sensitive, acknowledged intimacy with the research setting, and provided a more sophisticated understanding of power structures at work.

I had arrived as an urban person, 'transplanted' to the outlying area of a town, surrounded by dairy farms. One of the first practical challenges I faced was that it took at least 35 minutes to walk to the town's centre. This became increasingly frustrating as I found that almost every trip into town depended on a car. My urban sensibilities were challenged, ironically, by being forced to adopt a lifestyle resembling a suburban existence where one's daily life is filled with destination points and the car trips in between. As a researcher however, I was prompted to take a hard look at the geography of this place and the respective lifestyles that are adopted by various residents in town. I wanted to try to understand rather than simply criticize this situation that felt foreign to me. In the Summer of 1999 I moved with my family to the housing cooperative located right in the centre of Sackville. Here, closer to the daily bustle, I was able to sense the rhythm of the community and in my own mind and in the eyes of the town's people I became less of a stranger. I started my research with a general survey of the town environment, the social and economic structure of the community, the history of the place, and by establishing initial contacts for further work. Responding to the newness of my environment, I found I adjusted through introspection. By keeping a daily journal I could trace my journey of adaptation to the new environment, disclose my prejudices toward place and people, and reflect upon my gradually increasing ability to see a complex and rich picture of life in Sackville.

In the first couple of months I put much effort into fitting into Sackville. When I met two of the Civic Centre Board members I was able to take one step in relation to the dissertation: I expressed my interest in participating in the Civic Centre project. I was open about my research interests and received verbal consent to become involved from key members of the Board.

To my own surprise, after only a year of residency in town, so many opportunities for participation arose that I had to start making decisions about how deeply I wanted to get involved in public life. I didn't want to compromise the quality of my input as a volunteer, or lose focus and sacrifice the quality of my research. It meant becoming more selective in taking on new civic responsibilities. This meant concentrating on working on two committees - the Civic Centre Board and the Cultural Policy Board. Working in the community with the same people for a long time also helped to diminish my status as a newcomer. Still, gaining recognition as a real community member with something to offer took time. I remember during my first Civic Centre Board meeting in December 1998 one of the Board members jokingly remarked: "So now you are going to teach all us how to do this project, right?" I was facing the formidable task of proving to these people, and to myself, that I was joining them to help and, most importantly, to *learn about the situation*. Months passed and the Board members knowing about my research agenda, came to accept it, and seemed able separate it from my personal participation in the project. They appreciated my help and enthusiasm for the project. It was not easy to reach this level of trust, and sometimes I was frankly embarrassed by my attempts to fit in and to introduce my initiatives and opinions. I had to proceed with caution and remind myself once in a while that this was a small town where changes take place more slowly than I was used to.

Making conscious attempts to write down my reactions to various events, from the beginning of the study, helped me capture my journey, as well as leading to greater self confidence and improved self-examination skills. While writing and reading my journal I gradually realized what 'good' research meant to me. To be at the receiving end of the research was not enough, no matter how sophisticated my ethnographic skills of

gathering data became. I had the responsibility and the right to say what *I* felt and express *my* ideas about certain matters. Such a seemingly simple revelation had a powerful impact on my research direction. It fractured any subconscious inclination I might have had toward remaining comfortable behind the analytic researcher's 'distance,' and it gave me strength to proceed with my work, because I was part of it. It was in this context that William Whyte's thoughts on the character of his own participant observation became highly relevant and valuable in my own work. While tracing his research experiences during the Cornerville study, he maintained: "Instead of bowling in order to be able to observe something else, I should have been bowling in order to observe bowling." (Whyte, 1996:34)

During the school year that extends from September to April, Sackville fills with university students, and luckily (considering the age difference) I was still able to blend into the crowd, avoiding the need to provide justification for my casual presence in the stores, at the gym and in other public places. The opportunity to remain anonymous was especially valuable at the outset of the study when I concentrated on observation of town spaces, buildings, people and the ways they act and use local buildings and spaces. Early observations of these places and day-to-day activities provided immediate insights leading toward a better understanding of the town's physical structure, its form and rhythms of life. Before delving deeper into research of complex relationships, I appreciated the opportunity to grasp an overall sense of the local architecture, spatial patterns and social processes shaping the town environment.

The objective of producing knowledge directly useful to Sackville residents required evaluation criteria different from those used if the objective had been to produce arguments for a doctoral dissertation. But I submit that in fact these sets of criteria are complementary, and no 'conflict of interest' undermined the validity of the study. It was through working toward a more sophisticated understanding of my own role in the research that I was able to strengthen this conviction. It became clear that I had a responsibility to serve several distinct communities: the local Sackville community, the academic community and the professional design community. The criteria for valid and

effective knowledge within these different communities varied. I believe that exposing the 'warts and all' of the design process in my dissertation will be considered a constructive move toward presenting designers, other professionals and researchers with a critical evaluation of the complex design process. If research results were communicated in the same form to the Sackville public, however, it could cause a considerable rift in the community. This community is, after all, made up of individuals who put tremendous effort into making the Civic Centre project a reality by reconciling conflicting opinions and competing for scarce public funds. Appreciating the benefits of integrating agency and research, I adopted the notion that "academic knowledge of formally educated people works in a dialectical tension with the popular knowledge of the people to produce a more profound understanding of the situation." (Reason, 1994:328) I embraced my distinct goals and roles with a determination to produce research accounts, whether they might be articles for academic journals or reports in the local press, sensitive to potential readers.

5.5 Entering the field

Negotiating access to the Civic Centre project was at times a demanding part of the research. My key strategy at the outset of the study was to become a full participant in the project. I expressed my willingness to serve on the Board of Directors, but received a cautious suggestion from one of the Board members (with whom I was better acquainted) to first get involved as an observer. While 'sitting in' at the Board meetings was a good start, I made all possible attempts to earn my seat as a Board member. I volunteered for various tasks such as organizing meetings and recording of the minutes. The Board even decided to pay me a small amount of money to show their appreciation for my efforts. I also summarized the findings of the community survey which the Town Council and the Board had undertaken in the Fall of 1998 to test public opinion on the project, and I investigated financial support opportunities for the designing of energy-efficient buildings such as ice arenas. This work presented me with a perfect opportunity to gather data while

proving a personal commitment toward the project.

In a meeting held in the Fall of 1999, the Board decided to search for candidates to fill a couple of positions that had become vacant after some members left for various reasons. A few names of local community members came up during the meeting. I asked the Board to consider me as a candidate. While I did not know how the members would react to this 'bold' move, I felt that it was worth the risk. The next day I received a phone call from Doug[14], the Chair of the Board, who agreed to my request and apologized for not considering my candidacy earlier. It was one of the most emotional moments of the research. I felt genuinely moved and thankful that people trusted me. After all, it was a small town, one where a person is considered 'from away' if not born in Sackville. The next milestone came about half a year later when I accepted an offer to work on the Building Committee with the architect and a few other Board and Council members. Together we were to develop the architectural and engineering drawings for the project.

My acceptance in the wider community largely depended on my newly earned public identity and the personal relationships I developed while working on the Civic Centre project. Some of the contacts were made in pursuit of an overview of the community or in relation to particular aspects of research. Many of these relationships, such as those with Marilyn, the Cultural Sector Groups Coordinator, and local Councillor Virgil, developed beyond professional interest. Some of my contacts in town suggested how to locate other persons for future research, based on their perceptions of relevance to the research topic. Through such personal recommendations I connected with employees of the Tantramar District Planning Commission, and was myself recommended to others as Chair of the Cultural Policy Board. Through coordinating the Cultural Policy Board's projects I learned more about various aspects of cultural life in Sackville. For example, as a group we decided to write for the local paper monthly feature articles about popular, folk and professional cultural undertakings in the community. Subjects for these articles included curling club activities, the Sackville Arts Fair, summer yard sales and auctions, and the contributions of visiting professional artists.

5.6 Data collection and evaluation

Many of my interpretations of public life in Sackville came from people I had an opportunity to work with on volunteer committees or to chat with at the gym, grocery store or dinner table. In situations other than meetings I took field notes and made journal entries at home after the event or encounter had occurred. This was necessary if I was to approach situations in town as an insider and not cause unnecessary confusion or suspicion. Being in town every day made it easier to start conversations with locals about weather, town events, or more personal matters. Often I was able to learn answers to my research questions without even posing questions. During casual encounters some town residents revealed surprisingly vivid and passionate takes on important events and issues discussed within the community. Far from being impartial, these interpretations of social dynamics in town exposed the complex and contradictory nature of the community. My initial observations of buildings and people's actions, and my analysis of town development plans, were enriched by learning of the ways people perceived places and events. In other words, the environments and events were explained through the experiences of people participating in them.

One of the most exciting aspects of case study research for me was that with time I was able to comprehend the subtleties and the interconnectedness of the setting, where, for example, decisions of an architect resonated with the political position of Town Council, and where local history influenced attitudes toward the style and location of the Civic Centre. Seeking knowledge meant negotiating between data in the form of experiences, conversations and testimonies, and dealing with issues that crossed various epistemological, institutional and disciplinary boundaries.

A variety of types of data - photographs of Sackville environments and buildings; Civic Centre Board meeting minutes and records; the Board's correspondence; architectural drawings and technical documents; daily journal notes which contain accounts of my experiences and thoughts; accounts of conversations with town officials, key participants in the Civic Centre project, friends and acquaintances; Sackville Tribune-

Post articles and Town of Sackville public documents - became the resources for my investigation. The local weekly paper was one of the most valuable sources of information on public debate over major events in town. As local hog farmer Gladys Estabrooks remarked in an interview, she picks up the paper every time "to see what's making the place tick" (Hulsman, March 15, 2000:6).

The sheer amount of the primary material collected (hundreds of pages of meeting minutes, articles and notes), the immediacy of the setting, and the thematic directions the project offered, made it sometimes difficult to keep in clear view the main intellectual question. By the end of my second year in Sackville certain themes, issues and types of relationships observed were resurfacing, and the flow of new information decreased. I started concentrating on the depth rather than the breadth of the data (Denscombe, 1998:149), and pursued more focussed observations. My efforts shifted from the 'broad canvas' to specific passages of meanings, activities and relationships. While concerned with the social responsibility of design practice in general, I differentiated research questions further, inquiring into such variables as: social groups involved in the design process, the nature of their involvement, the criteria and rules of relations between these groups, and the power relations influencing the course of the design process.

Analysis of data became feasible when several patterns emerged. I was able to identify that Sackville's social and economic history had profound influence on civic decisions, and shaped public judgments of the town environment and its representations. It also became evident that relations among the main power groups - Mount Allison University, the Town government, and the local business community - and the tension between their respective ethical frameworks, had overtly and covertly surfaced during the Civic Centre design process. Changes in the direction of Provincial politics (the political shift from a Liberal to a Conservative administration in Summer of 1999) permeated the daily life of the town and altered plans for future development and maintenance of services. Stiff competition for declining government grants also shaped many of the decisions of the Civic Centre design team. Finally, when deeply immersed in the project I found that certain individuals (including Doug, Civic Centre Board Chair; Andrew, the

architect; and a handful of local Councillors), were making decisions which determined the direction of the design process and the form and content of the Civic Centre itself. They were influenced in these decisions by their professional roles, social backgrounds and personal beliefs. All these patterns fell into an irregular, but tightly interconnected pattern of relationships, actions, attitudes and beliefs. The pattern was a multifaceted but integrated collage of human activity around an act of design - a process oriented toward the transformation of a built environment.

Constantly learning how to interact and behave, and to approach certain sensitive topics, I was able to obtain knowledge that grew with the dynamics of the project and with the changing relationships I had with people I lived and worked with. In building a structural plan to illustrate the pattern of interactions between participants involved in design process, the issues and problems guiding these interactions were pointed to by the participants themselves. When revisiting field notes and transcripts I looked for the 'voice' of these participants. I searched for themes and interconnections occurring in accounts of their experiences, and in the articulations of their views and beliefs.

Throughout the course of the investigation, the examination of facts and things was transformed into a more holistic practice stressing processes, relationships and interdependency among the component parts. The research also bore features of a moral-political inquiry, "acknowledging that 'facts' are always infused with values, and that both facts and values are open to ongoing critical debate." (Code, 1993:30) In my effort to map the design process, I opened the study up to more critical analysis. Reflecting further on case study findings, I reviewed the relationship between my newly developed analytical categories and the general research questions formulated in the early stages of the thesis development. These questions addressed the elements that contribute to public interaction in Sackville; the kinds of relationships that can be identified in the town between social interaction and the built environments, and the conditions forming these relationships; and how to gain a better understanding of these relationships and effectively use this knowledge in design practice. Revision of research assumptions and analytical categories in light of the case findings allowed for the generation of concluding

arguments referring to the social responsibility of design as a professional and intellectual practice.

5.7 Evaluation of research methodology

Relating my work to social science studies with thematic and theoretical similarities helped in determining criteria for research vigour, legitimacy and validity. While traditional social science methods such as participant observation, ethnography and interviews were adopted in this study, my dissertation work was informed and inspired by several qualitative research approaches toward responding to a particular socio-physical situation. In the scope of qualitative research approaches I have encountered, my qualitative study came closest to being a Participative Inquiry (Reason, 1994). Embracing several key characteristics of participatory research: participation by people being studied; inclusion and validation of popular knowledge; a focus on community empowerment and consciousness-raising - my work further integrated scientific investigation with education and political action (Borgatta and Borgatta, 1992).

Many of the discoveries made during the research process helped advance the Civic Centre project. This points to aspects of Action Inquiry that were adopted in this work. Some of the knowledge was gained directly in action (i.e., by developing architectural drawings) and was utilized for further action (i.e., to inform the public on the progress and problems relating to the project). The inquiry was geared toward answering questions of how to transform organizations and individuals into self-reflective collaborators, and how to develop a "genuinely well-informed action" in such a community based design project (Torbert, 1981:145).

Conducting a research project based on an extended immersion in a case has its limitations and advantages. As rich and contextualized as it gets, the case still presents a single reference to a particular occurrence of social life. Therefore it is very important to communicate clearly and vigorously how such an intimate and singular research study can contribute valuable and valid knowledge to broader audiences and across disciplinary

fields.

In order to meet the challenges posed by my research work, I took steps to ensure its appropriateness and effectiveness as I acquired data and drew theoretical findings. I consider several strategies adopted in my research cornerstones in establishing its validity and reliability. Among these strategies are: use of multiple data sources and methods; prolonged and persistent immersion in the field; comparison of acquired data with broader political, historical and material trends and relations, and with relevant research studies addressing related problems and issues; triangulation of research methods in identifying research problems and dominant themes; information validation through acquisition of feedback from diverse informants; and self-reflection and self-analysis throughout the research process and generation of findings.

The discursive nature of the phenomena analysed in the study required continuous references to the research itself when drawing the criteria for good research. While gathering and interpreting data, a number of times I pondered on the issue of credibility of generalizations made from the focussed case study. Occasionally events and situations appeared to be so unique and idiosyncratic that I felt I had to be careful to allay suspicions and to demonstrate the extent to which case findings are justifiable in generating interpretive research.

Representativeness of the case becomes an unsurmountable problem if the validity is directly tied to statistical inferences. In my research qualitative inferences were based on the "validity of the analysis rather than on the representativeness of events." (Bailey, White and Pain, 1999:172) Acknowledging the danger in making unwarranted claims based on a small-scale research, I submit that the complex and rich dynamics of this community project presented a unique opportunity to further evaluate and advance existing knowledge. My goals were achieved by capturing multiple, contextualized readings of the events; evaluating design as a social practice; and representing a more sophisticated understanding of the collaborative design process.

The commonalities and differences are valuable in interpretive research, but generation of theory is not as straightforward as adding disparate pieces of data and

averaging them toward conclusions. Acknowledging that "differing social positions generate variable constructions of reality and afford different perspective on the world," (Code, 1993:39) I embrace building of theory from details - from particular experiences, projects and case studies - where valid knowledge is always situated and context specific. At the same time I strongly believe that explanatory potential can be reached when commonalities are identified among particulars. One way of establishing conditions for such explanatory potential is to recognize that any kind of theory generated from research is partial, and that the concept of model rather than finite theory seems to reflect pluralism in the continuous pursuit of knowledge. (Longino, 1993:116) The model of the design process I was able to recreate from the Civic Centre case study incorporated a variety of relevant theories, studies and research accounts.

To make my participation in the design project more effective and informed, and further link the data with the intellectual problem - the discussion of ethical and socio-political aspects in design practice - I had to contextualize the Civic Centre project and issues pertaining to this study. To provide adequate context to the case study, my literature review had to spread across disciplines from architecture and urban design, to cultural and urban geography, to planning theory and practice, to urban sociology and environmental psychology. My aim was to investigate how the Sackville community initiative compared to other projects within the regional and the North American context (Jordan, 1999; Hermanauz, 1996; Hough, 1995; Winder, 1998). I searched for studies relating to design and planning of civic facilities (Bale, 1994; Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee, 1998), and on analyses of collaborations involving community groups, municipalities and designers (Robertson, 1999; Wasserman, Sullivan and Palermo, 2000).

As my study progressed, it became evident that it wasn't sufficient to concentrate only on internal community dynamics in attempts to disentangle some of the political and financial aspects of the Civic Centre project. Focussed observations of events and exploration of emotional and personal experiences required careful interpretation to reveal their "embeddedness within larger social patterns." (Burt and Code, 1995:34) For example, individuals' comments on the Civic Centre and other issues contained clear

indications that provincial political forces shaped investment patterns within the community and, in turn, local outcomes of the project could potentially influence the economics and social environment of the region. The challenge was "to hold the two sides together," to recognize broader underlying causes of the socio-economic processes while acknowledging the power of the specific and unique local setting (Entrikin, 1991:306).

One of my principal concerns throughout this research was to be accurate in interpreting the views of those whom I studied and worked with. This effort was made more transparent by identifying sources of information; by making my own views on certain aspects of social life explicit (especially when such phenomena were controversial); and by exposing historical and organizational contexts within which the observations were made. Through triangulation of various methods (observation, text and conversation analysis) I validated data and deepened my understanding of several dominant research themes which proved to be most representative of, and relevant to, the research topic. Triangulation of research methods also led me to change my assumptions on some issues related to the case. At the outset of the study I assumed, for example, that relations between the community at large and Mount Allison University would play a great role in defining the design process. After analysis of meeting transcripts, internal Board correspondence and accounts made by individuals, this proved to be less consequential than relations between the community, the provincial government and the Town Council. In addition to triangulation, I discussed research progress reports with Doug, Chair of the Tantramar Regional Civic Centre Board; Linda, Parks and Recreation Department Coordinator; and Andrew, the architect.

I believe that the credibility of my research grew with the duration of engagement in the field. The more time I spent on the project and in town, and the longer my observation and participation, the more complex and sensitive an understanding I gained. In my capacities as colleague, volunteer and friend, I came across some rather sensitive personal information and reflections. This meant that I had to deal with ethical issues of confidentiality and record some of the events and opinions without jeopardizing the

privacy and reputation of individuals in the community.

Sometimes my own experiences were not sufficient to provide answers and explanations to questions and concerns arising during encounters with the study participants and subjects. Only through confronting my preconceptions and expanding my existing understandings was I able to develop recognition of the processes at hand. For example, when I began this study I was puzzled by resistance to the Civic Centre project from some well respected senior members of the community. After all, I couldn't see anything controversial about this exemplary initiative. Who in Sackville wouldn't want a new Civic Centre? Through reviewing my own notes and others' letters to the editor of the local paper, and through in-depth conversations with several town residents, I identified some of the complex reasons for such reaction to the project. I paid particular attention to the construction of versions of events in reports and interpretations made by participants. Much of the concern or opposition to the Civic Centre project had to do with an entrenched resistance to change that appears unfamiliar or is carried out in an unconventional process. Resistance was also fuelled by concern over losing revenue opportunities through rental of spaces for community events within the town (until this time divided among various churches). Concern over rising property taxes was also expressed among retired property owners. How does care for the future of the community, the welfare of the children and grandchildren fit into such position? According to demographic data, the population of Sackville is aging. More and more young people are leaving the community for larger urban centres, and more older people on fixed pensions are left with private homes to care for. From the perspective of many older Sackvillians, any civic project that goes beyond absolute necessity should be considered a waste of the taxpayers' money. Here age, cultural, economic and other factors weave into a tight-knit fabric of power relations, supporting the notion that "standards of evidence and knowledge are historically relative and dynamic." (Hankinson Nelson, 1993:142)

5.8 Summary

Reflecting on the overall methodological approach adopted in this study, I have to admit that a compromise was struck between providing a "detailed, comprehensive portrayal of social reality" and building a focussed argument based on data collected. My aim was to analyse the processes of cooperation and communication between various groups involved in the design project, while relying on detailed descriptions of particular phenomena. While I combined the methodological approaches of literature review and analysis, and participant observation and ethnography, a significant amount of energy and enthusiasm was directed toward the participatory strategy of the research: toward understanding and taking part in the community design initiative, and aiming to empower community members to work toward structural change. As a result, three kinds of knowledge (Heron in Reason, 1994:326) have been achieved: experiential knowledge gained through direct encounter with the local environment, community members and other individuals involved in the Civic Centre project; practical knowledge about the process of planning, design and construction of a public facility; and propositional knowledge encompassing learning about, and contributing to, public debate on the social role of design action.

The methodological experience I gained in this study has supported my assumption that the means to achieve knowledge cannot easily be established before the research process. While the general direction of following a participatory qualitative inquiry focussed on the case study was established at the beginning, many intermediary steps such as revision of study focus, selection of and access to key informants, and identification of main themes, had to be addressed locally by analysing specific instances and testing research techniques. For example, I had difficulty establishing sufficient contact and trust with Terry, an active Board member who took significant control over development of the architectural plans and the fundraising campaign. Instead of pushing direct communication and risking putting him on guard, I decided to seek opportunities to gain more information from him in group discussion environments.

One of the most positive lessons learned in this study was that by consciously developing my methodological approach through learning from other researchers (Code, 1993; Lees, 1999), field work and my own experiences, I was able to apprehend the process of participatory research design from the inside. I was more than an educated consumer of methodological knowledge. The goals of my epistemological and substantive inquiry were interwoven and realized through ongoing interaction with physical and social environments. Projects, studies and research papers become landmarks rather than finite propositions of truths about the world. I learned that being involved in action oriented research requires considerable effort in learning how to communicate effectively with the non-academic world, and understanding potentials and limitations of such collaborations. Every case study and project will present new challenges and require new criteria for professional conduct. New maps of power relations will have to be drawn constantly to make collaboration possible.

6.0 CHAPTER 5: Exploring the relationship between social interaction and the built environment in Sackville: The Tantramar Regional Civic Centre Project

In exploring the nature of relationships between social interaction and the built environment in Sackville I chose to focus on a single important event in the life of the town - the planning and design of the Civic Centre. Through a study of this design project and its connections to local and regional politics, administration and planning, I will examine and evaluate the process of design and the experiences of people involved in transforming their public space, and discuss the consequences of this collaborative initiative.

The keys to developing a better understanding of the issues at hand are paying attention to detail and revealing complex networks of events and relationships shaping the project. In this chapter I will present a chronological narration of the case study. I will expose practices and actions taking place in public and behind closed doors. The analysis of events is broken down into three main stages: conceptual planning; stalling and political games; and implementation of the project.

In discussions immediately preceding and following the presentation of the case I will address political, economic and cultural contexts. Here I will examine in more depth the conditions defining the character of public interaction and people's attitudes toward social life and their built environment. Exploration of these contexts will help to explain certain project participants' actions and reveal 'hidden' factors behind design decision making.

6.1 The local economy: shaping attitudes toward public interaction and the built environment

Sackville's economy shapes civic decisions and the community's judgements of the town environment and its representations. One dominant concern that preoccupied local residents during the Civic Centre project was the cost of the new development.

Associated with this concern were fears of risking already limited resources on a public amenity considered by some to be a luxury.

Interrelated trends condition the politics of decision making in Sackville: the yearning for economic development and new opportunities, and the attachment to local values and traditions reinforced through the active re-creation of history. Competing and complementary visions of the past, present and future of Sackville largely define the criteria under which the community's built environment is preserved, developed and evaluated.

Sackville is characterized by the complexity of changes experienced by many communities engaging in economic restructuring. In rural areas such as Sackville, this transition manifests in the demise of an established staple economy and its supporting industry and the rise of the community as a location of residential and tourist consumption. According to Paul Jordan's (1999:iii) regional evaluations of a mail survey of 20 small Maritime communities, "the majority of the respondents were dissatisfied with the number and efforts to create new employment." The word on the street and in letters to the local newspaper is that the same concerns prevail in Sackville. The rapid decline of traditional employment in areas such as fishing, agriculture and other industries heavily dependent on natural resources, has been felt for the last several decades. The town was not fortunate enough to maintain a solid core of independent businesses. In the last few years, the Sackville community has also seen the loss of the Atlantic Wholesalers headquarters, the RCMP crime laboratory and the Agriculture Canada Animal Pathology Laboratory. Even if some other businesses partially filled the void, more has been lost than gained. The unemployment rate in 1996 in Sackville was 11.7 per cent and the provincial average was 15.5 per cent (Statistics Canada, 1996).

As many traditional industries have declined over the decades, and not many new ones have been successful, the main employer in town remains the university. The university provides job opportunities for many town residents as support and maintenance staff. Sackville has a high percentage of people in the $70,000-and-over income category when compared to the provincial average (Statistics Canada, 1996). Many individuals

with these higher salaries are employed by the university. Of course, most professors and upper level administrators are not native to Sackville. They come from various parts of the country and the world to settle in the community. The majority of University employees live in the town, while some live in smaller neighbouring communities and a few commute from Moncton (in these cases the spouse of the university employee works in Moncton).

While the university's job market is crucial for Sackville's economic survival, over the years it has not significantly changed the division of labour among the local, life-long residents and women in particular. Town women working for the University most frequently hold clerical positions or are employed as custodial staff or cooks. Most of other work opportunities in town are also in 'traditional' female areas of employment: retail, fast food restaurants, nursing homes, the local hospital, and the call centre.[15]

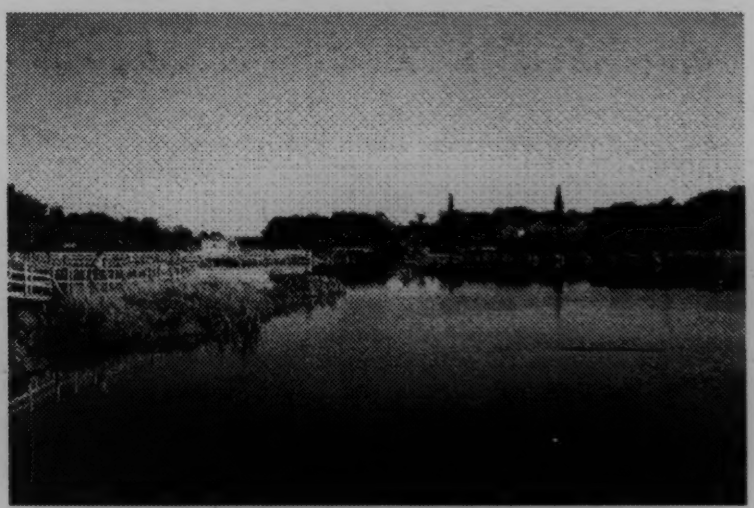

Plate 3 Waterfowl Park featuring a network of boardwalks. Located between downtown Sackville and the Trans-Canada Highway

The town government's eagerness to retain or increase employment in the area was demonstrated in a recent planning decision. In August of 2000, when a local trucking

company located near the environmentally sensitive Waterfowl Park decided to expand right to the park's edge, the desire of local Council to attract economic development overshadowed its environmental concerns and aesthetic values. Council gave the project the 'green light' despite planners' concerns over potential traffic problems and, most importantly, the possibility of contamination of the adjacent marsh which, over the years, has became a refuge for thousands of migrating birds (see Plate 3). The opportunity to create 30 to 35 new jobs for local residents was politically too important to dismiss or even delay. As one of the Councillors stated during a Town meeting "the business shouldn't be forced to lose the construction season as a result of planners' hesitation" (Scott-Wallace, August 16, 2000:2).

In addition to declining job opportunities, changes in federal transfer payments to the provinces have resulted in the provision of fewer and lower quality services in many regional towns and villages. Economic globalization and a shrinking local economic base also brought a fairly new problem to the community of Sackville. Many goods and services are only accessible in larger regional centres. Sackville residents make frequent trips to the next bigger city of Moncton to shop for such items as clothes, furniture and even groceries. The role of the town as a place of living, but not necessarily as the place of working and shopping, is rising. Overall, slightly more than half of the residents in small Maritime communities work where they actually live (Jordan, 1999:15). As a result, Sackville has grown to more closely resemble an urban bedroom community than a sustainable and economically independent town.

Apart from attempts to resurrect Sackville's economic base, local boosters - select Councillors, town employees and volunteers - are actively involved in the creation of a local 'identity.' In 1999, the Town of Sackville was recognized nationally for producing an outstanding promotional package about the town. In this package Sackville was portrayed as a quiet, family oriented community which has rich historical traditions and inviting surroundings, and welcomes tourists and new residents. Among the spaces marketed as main attractions were the Tantramar Marsh with its Waterfowl Park, and Mount Allison University.

The promotion of the town's historic and lifestyle appeal has been one of the dominant developmental strategies endorsed by the provincial and local governments. Town Council proposed a strategy to create a "positive environment and attitude within the community" while targeting potential residential and business markets. The core of this strategy was to involve citizens in "selling and improving the town" (Scott-Wallace, March 8, 2000:1). In August of 2000, a Sackville Tribune-Post article proudly announced that "Sackville will be one of the first locations to join the ranks of those quaint little New Brunswick communities strutting their down-to-earth stuff to benefit from a newly-launched marketing program known as Hometown New Brunswick" (Dobson, August 23, 2000:1).

Essentially, this approach encourages a commodification of local experience and a "mobilization of cultural meaning" in order to attract residential consumers and tourists to the community (McCabe, 1998:232). The outcome of these efforts is the articulated sense of 'home place' as an integral part of the wider construction of Maritime identity. According to Shauna McCabe (1998), this imagined regional identity encompasses such qualities as simplicity and innocence which thrive in the picturesque, unchanging setting, situated outside of the rhythms and problems of the twenty first century. The promotion of a single vision of the community inevitably subverts a wider range of imaginings. It undermines expression of the diversity and richness of the community. It further masks the pressing issues generated by the continuous fragmentation and transformation of rural communities and small towns in the face of ever increasing influences of global communications, urban economy and urban culture. As rural economies decline, and urban ways of living and more flexible modes of communal association become part of daily life, recognizing and communicating complex and often contradictory notions of community as a social construct becomes fundamental in ensuring a responsible and responsive approach to negotiating future developmental options.

The selective and narrow fabrication of locale in Sackville reflects the dominant social attitude toward change without a challenge to established values. One such stereotype can be identified in the words of the Sackville area MLA. "Visitors to our

region want a unique, hands-on and authentic experience. They want something they cannot get at home. They're looking for memories" (Dobson, August 23, 2000:1). The tendency to link the essential community character with environmental features such as historic buildings and sites helps to crystalize the ideas into more stable and controllable elements. As a result, the environments, the vistas, and even the members of the community who don't fit the mould of the marketable stereotype are inadequately represented. For example, many blue collar workers (some employed on a seasonal basis) and their families living in 'unsightly' mobile homes on the outskirts of the town view their belonging to the community and place of habitation as problematic. Much of this sense derives from their seeing economic opportunities steadily shrinking. The promotion of historic town appeal and flocks of tourists are not likely to change their lives in any significant way. Rather, these things may rub salt into their wounds. Even those who are more economically fortunate can feel alienated from their place of living. Many professionals in the Sackville community are connected through their work ties and cyberspace to much broader collectivities. To them this town is not a historic relic but a home base which is an inseparable part of a multifaceted and dynamic global network. Apathy and cynicism become responses of those who are not represented in the image of Sackville.

Despite the inadequacy and selectiveness of the representation of the community through the promotion of tourism, it would be irresponsible to reject this economic strategy altogether. Considering economic realities and the apparent lack of other viable developmental alternatives, taking the direction toward transforming Sackville into a residential and tourist attraction provides a glimmer of hope for economic survival. The paramount challenge here is the maintenance of balance between the creation of a marketable environment for tourism and an openness to the community's need for a modicum of self-determination and social and cultural diversity. However, local strategists concerned with economic development in Sackville do not seriously deal with the issues of social transformation and an increased necessity to allow for difference in the social spectrum and cultural arena.

In this regard, I contend that the Civic Centre project did not fit neatly into the agendas of preservationists concerned with the historic local image or promoters of industrial and business growth. Developmental visions for the town were brought forward by dominant social groups (town elites and business representatives) often not willing to challenge the status quo in the community. The initial concept of this public project had been more daring and far reaching than the construction of a hockey rink. But its future impact was not easily predicted, and therefore, not employable for political manipulation.

The choice to build only an arena radically limits potential use. In a recent conversation with a town Councillor, I was told that public speculation by some is that as few as 200 families (or approximately 600 individuals) will use the rink (Hammock, February 19, 2001). This represents just over 10% of the population of Sackville, and does not include the students and residents of neighbouring communities.

Disadvantaged residents in the community who might benefit from the non-hockey elements of such a facility are not easy to identify by specific social, age or gender group. Among those losing out are many low income families with children who do not have resources to travel or spend significant amounts of money for entertainment and recreation. Certainly, half of the residents in the housing co-operative in which I live (at least five families with children and grandchildren) would benefit from a quality public facility like the Civic Centre. There are also many groups of adults and children who are in great need of better facilities for choir practices, club meetings, and track and field and soccer training. It is also worth noting that the community of Sackville is home to many financially constrained seniors and disabled individuals of all ages, and that there is a large nursing home on the same block as the Civic Centre property, many residents of which could use the Centre for activities. The current Recreation Department building can provide only a limited range of programs because it is small and has only one small room that is wheelchair accessible (see Plate 4).

From the beginning, the construction of a hockey arena was presented to the town population by town officials and the press as an obvious priority, and was accepted by part of the community as such. Judging by reactions and support levels, assertions by

Council and other community leaders that hockey is an important part of the Canadian recreational tradition seems to be a politically safe and popular statement. Still, the choice of investing scarce resources into a primarily male team sport revealed a gender bias.

Plate 4 Recreation Centre building in downtown area of Sackville

Many traditional sports landscapes can be "read as masculine landscapes". According to John Bale (1994:12) "few gender specific sports have been formulated and organized by women and women's sports are mainly mimetic versions of the activities of men." The primary users of the Sackville rink are expected to be male dominated junior and senior amateur hockey teams. The issue here is not only how many boys and girls and men and women will directly benefit from the arena, but what this facility signifies as a major community investment. Giving priority to construction of the rink means that the local recreational and public landscape is not going to change qualitatively. Hockey players will still play hockey, but in a newer building.[16] Town residents will be still able to watch hockey games, but more will be accommodated, and more comfortably, in the new heated facility. Beyond the fact that many are not at all interested in hockey, there remains the problem that the majority of 'users,' and women in particular, will again be

relegated to the status of spectator or passive observer. Support for one type of sport, no matter how popular it appears to be, is going to take needed resources and attention away from other recreational and cultural activities that could potentially diversify and enrich public experience. Diversity of supported activities is important in overcoming gender and age biases still prevalent in contemporary sports environments.

6.2 Community life and town spaces: the relationship between the social and the physical defining public interaction in Sackville

An economic analysis can reveal only a partial picture of the community. The character of a community, and its public life in particular, are also conditioned by powerful symbolic and habitual systems. Social interaction is as much affected by geographical and architectural elements as by the social imagination and traditions of people who use the spaces (Mandoki, 1998:75).

Plate 5 View of main Street looking toward Tim Horton's café and the main intersection

Plate 6 Waterfowl Park in Winter

The town's residential architecture ranges from late Victorian homes in the downtown area to clusters of mobile homes off the beaten track. A few newer office and bank buildings are located in the downtown core near the main intersection, down the hill from the University campus (see Plate 5). Here there are also several larger historic buildings that accommodate primarily shops and small businesses on the main floor, and include student rental apartments above where the spaces have been maintained. Green spaces and undeveloped low laying marsh lands have been part of the townscape for many years. The flood areas in town (not suitable for development) stretch right into the downtown core, creating a refreshing balance between open spaces and more densely developed town blocks (see Plate 6). If the preservation of historic buildings is particularly significant to the town boosters and heritage advocates, the maintenance of a balance between natural elements and the built environment is valued greatly by most of the town residents (see Plate 7). This balance between openness of the landscape and the seclusion of small town spaces is believed to be a special feature of the local setting, defining its aesthetic value and contributing to the enjoyment of social interaction in the town.

Plate 7 A favourite location among locals and town visitors: the Swan Pond is located on the University campus

Social life in town was moulded by years of established life routines, collective memories and emotions. A generally slower pace of life contributes to this community's relationship with its built environment. Many of the communal events are organized and supported by the residents themselves . As a result, a great number of hours of volunteer labour are spent maintaining the events calendar in Sackville (see Plates 8 and 9). Strong groups such as volunteer committees, various church groups, boys and girls clubs, and sports associations, dominate the social landscape of the town. Many residents interact and spend their leisure time with their own families or as a part of familiar communal groups. Of course in the winter activities often center on hockey and snowmobiling.[17] More spontaneous and diverse intermingling takes place only occasionally during larger events such as festivals and fairs.

Plates 8 and 9 Annual Polar Bear Dip: a local charity event held every Winter just outside Sackville, drawing steady crowds of participants and spectators

Part of the reason the community lacks variety in social interaction is because it remains ethnically and racially rather uniform. The Town of Sackville was established as, and has for many years remained, an Anglophone stronghold and market hub in a French

speaking region of New Brunswick. A continuing lack of new local employment opportunities and a still relatively small turnover of existing residents has meant that there has been little increase in ethnic, religious or racial diversity. Most of the small number of visible minorities in town are students or faculty and their families. The affiliation of these individuals with the University however renders them, in the eyes of permanent residents, as not properly belonging to the core community. As University people and visible minorities they are doubly cursed.

According to Lyn Lofland (1998:9), the public realm is the one "in which individuals in co-presence tend to be personally unknown or only categorically known to one another", and is distinct from parochial or communal realms. In the process of mapping the social space of Sackville, I refer to the concept of the parochial realm. This concept helps me identify the transitional space between the familiar and intimate private realm and the public realm of strangers which is more common in larger cities. The parochial spaces are "characterized by a sense of commonality among acquaintances and neighbours who are involved in interpersonal networks that are located within 'communities'" (Lofland, 1998:10).

Sackville, in this respect, is primarily defined by communal and group sentiments and spaces. Despite being a university town with significant periodic increases in population (with the comings and goings of students), a steadily growing population of new residents who work in the nearby city of Moncton, and a continuous influx of Summer visitors and tourists, Sackville has too few amenities for nurturing public culture. Increases in these permanent and temporary populations and number of visitors have not yet caused the town to confront accommodation of a broad range of social interaction and to reconsider provision of public spaces.

Much of the communal interaction here takes place in parking lots, stores, the post office, Tim Horton's coffee shop, local pubs and the curling club (see Plate 10). For the past two decades the local Parks and Recreation Department has been located in a pre-manufactured steel building resembling more a garage or a storage shed than a main public and recreation building. Over the years local residents have developed and

mastered diverse and flexible use of this and other existing town buildings and spaces for day-to-day interaction and various social and communal events. Many indoor public events are hosted by churches and local businesses. Students spend most of their time on campus. Classrooms, residences and even the centralized dining hall are contained in the same campus area.

Plate 10 The 'hot spot' of downtown Sackville: Main Street near the Post Office and the grocery store

While many town spaces have been adapted for flexible use, they have different significance to people occupying different roles in the social spectrum. New students walking the streets of Sackville are more likely to interpret the environment as public space where they experience a certain sense of anonymity. To a long time resident these same streets and shops are parochial spaces. What is to one the lively bustle of the town is to another a web of familiar encounters with friends, enemies and neighbours.

Plate 11 Entrance to the Post Office building

After more prolonged exposure to town life, I came to the conclusion that the sense that the spaces are anonymous and public quickly fades. Soon familiar faces are everywhere. The spaces which in other urban settings are designed, perceived and used as public domains, in Sackville appear to be more parochial than public. For example, the post office, located right in the middle of town, serves more than its traditional function of maintaining the flow of correspondence (see Plate 11). Some people who have mail boxes here, especially the elderly, take their time when they make their daily trip to the post office. The building has wide windows which face Main Street, the grocery store and the downtown parking lot. This is where downtown activity can be observed conveniently while chatting with a neighbour, listening to the latest gossip, and sorting the 'real' mail

from the flyers. If a stranger appears at the post office and picks up mail from one of the boxes, people notice it right away.

Traditional single family homes dominate the residential landscape of Sackville. The majority of residents live in these homes which, by Canadian standards, are more affordable than in other, more densely populated regions. Flats or apartments are rented by students, people employed on short term or part-time contracts, and various 'others' who either can't afford their own home, or can't take care of a private property because of their age or health.

Controversy over the recent development of a 27-unit apartment building in town illustrated how some homeowners see themselves as the protectors of an established lifestyle and values. The prospect of the new building caused an uproar among neighbourhood residents. When the proposal for this development and consideration for re-zoning were discussed in Council Chambers and during public meetings, neighbouring homeowners were primarily concerned over the kinds of residents the new building would attract. The majority of the people in the neighbourhood did not want to see students moving onto their turf, causing trouble and eroding the 'family' community. Town planners were blamed for wanting to change the zoning laws to allow for such development in the single family residential area. "The solution is simple for council: do nothing, change nothing and leave the zoning as it is and has been legislated in the past," stated one angry resident several months prior to the Council's formal decision to consider development (Scott-Wallace, November 24, 1999:1). As the construction of the residential building was funded privately, most Councillors considered it to be an opportunity for growth and additional tax revenues for the shrinking town budget. In response to the angry protest of residents, one of the Councillors advised that "Council shouldn't shut down development because of Council's inability to plan for the future due to lack of professional guidance" (Scott-Wallace, March 1, 2000:1).

The example of the conflict over the construction of the multi-unit rental apartment building reveals the community's strong feelings of propriety toward their private homes and residential neighbourhoods. It also shows that for many town residents

the home place is construed as physically and symbolically separate and remote from the more diverse and eclectic university environment. According to my observations and conversations with town residents, the dominant traditional view of the family space, so vital in the community, includes the interpretation of the female as the primary pillar supporting the home space. The strong presence of the churches in the community and the lack of economic and lifestyle alternatives in large part perpetuate patriarchal relations and make it difficult to expand the range of social ties and lifestyles within the community. These gender relations are often accepted and reinforced as part of the tradition of the wholesome living of the 'original' town settlers.

I have discussed how economic problems in the community hinder the growth of living standards in general and women's opportunities for quality employment in particular. In addition, Sackville's built environment lacks places where women could experience more flexible or unconventional forms of socialization. The local fitness club is one of the few places in Sackville that proves to be successful in accommodating a broad spectrum of users and social experiences in an environment that is inviting and not intimidating. While The Fitness Loft is a private facility and is open only to those who can afford the user fees, it is one of the few spaces in town where public, communal, intimate and individual experiences blend easily. The balance between regular and temporary users makes this place appealing to newcomers and more interesting to regular users. More than 80 per cent of the club members are women. Here many students, university employees and town women of all ages walk the treadmills and lift weights side by side (see Plate 12). In the mornings the gym is usually full of women who do not necessarily know each other, but do exchange casual smiles and greetings, and sometimes, over time, establish new relationships and friendships. The fitness club offers a qualitatively different experience from the other established recreational facility, the Curling Club. The Sackville Curling Club supports more traditional and group oriented recreational experiences. It continues to be popular among local residents and newcomers who often take up curling to establish closer ties with local families and become known in the local social circles.

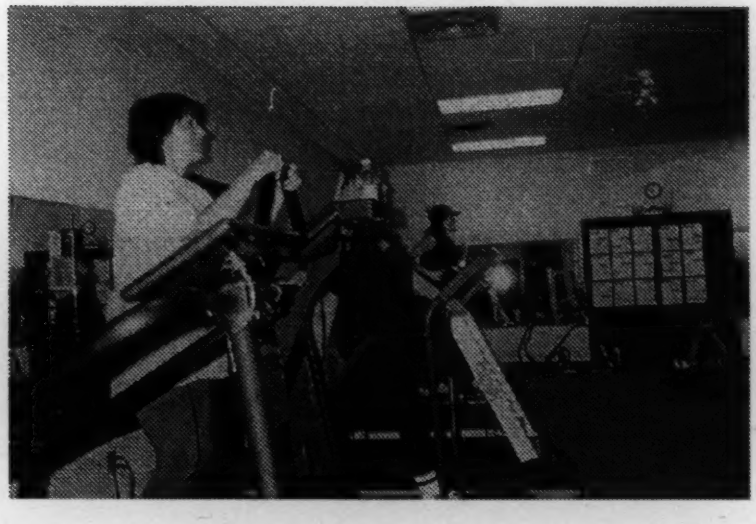

Plate 12 Patrons working out at the local Fitness Loft

The adherence of some town people to the 'old ways' of living does not diminish the need of other members of the local population to have increased opportunities for more diverse social encounters. I suggest that newcomers to town would feel more comfortable if the range of possible social contacts could be expanded beyond private experiences, familiar communal networks, or group affiliations, to introduce relational fluidity. The chemistry between various groups such as students, 'townies' and new residents could be greatly improved by encouraging public interaction in the town's spaces. To my mind, the multi-purpose Civic Centre was an example of a space that would provide such opportunities.

The fact that the community historically did not have a centralized communal gathering place (one that was designed for or adequately served such a purpose) has hindered the full social and political development of the public realm. It also meant that organizing the town's population in support of the Civic Centre concept was a problem. Though the majority of residents stood behind the multi-purpose centre, their commitment wavered when the vocal opponents became more active. Without a public

space for full discussion of communal issues for all community members, the views of the vocal minority tended to prevail. The Civic Centre was perceived by the local population more as a desired novelty rather than an opportunity for improvement or a contribution to local traditions of socializing.

To unravel the relationship between the town residents and the Civic Centre, and understand the reasons for changes in the project from the original concept to the resulting building, I will provide a narrative account of the process beginning with the conceptual planning stage.

6.3 Conceptual planning

It all started in the Fall of 1996 when Sackville Mayor Will Campbell appointed a Community Centre Committee to undertake necessary research to establish a "multi-purpose Community Centre in the town of Sackville" (Community Centre Committee, 1997:1). The wording chosen to identify the project implied the goal was to build a multi-purpose centre. There was a general understanding that an ice arena would be one of the centre's components. The individuals appointed to this committee represented the town community, several sports clubs, Town Council and the Parks and Recreation Department. Four out of six original members remain involved with the project today, and three of them still serve on the Board of Directors. Doug Miller, a university arena ice-maker of 28 years, and a former Town Councillor, was appointed to chair the committee when it began. Doug has stayed with the project for five years.

The reason behind the Town's decision to consider building the facility was that the existing Mount Allison University arena was 50 years old and required costly repairs. According to a consultant's feasibility report, renovations to the arena would be more expensive than construction of a new building (see Plate 13). A half century 'town and gown affair' had involved the Town paying user fees and repairs to the building in exchange for ice time for town residents. The University, which owned the building, decided that they no longer wanted to be involved in the operation of the ice rink. The

community was left on its own to deal with the complicated situation.

Plate 13 Allison Gardens building on Mount Allison campus: one of the alternative sites considered for the new Civic Centre construction

The beginning of the conceptual planning stage was marked by the Committee's decision to learn about similar regional facilities and meet people involved their design, operation and maintenance. In January 1997, Committee members visited various civic centres in the Maritime region.[18] The size and cost of these centres varied from the modest Brookfield, N.S. Sportsplex, serving a community of approximately 2000 residents, to an $18 million dollar regional facility, 20 years in making, in Bathurst, N.B.. The Sackville group directed its attention to several aspects of planning, design and

operation of the facilities. The Committee looked at how the projects were initially organized, who coordinated the planning and design work up to the construction stage, who was responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the centres, how the communities acquired funds for the design and the construction, and how the communities manage the financial aspects of operation of these public facilities. All of the recreational centres visited had an arena as a component, yet there were often provisions for other kinds of sports including swimming, curling, track and field, and soccer. All centres had facilities for general recreational and social activities (Community Centre Committee, 1997:3-15).

The visits produced a wealth of information and data that later became a source for the Tantramar Regional Civic Centre concept. Despite the problems and shortcomings that were identified in some of the public facilities around New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, it was hard not become enthusiastic seeing that the hard work of local communities and their governments resulted in real bricks-and-mortar community centres.[19]

A review of this information followed shortly. The Community Centre Committee prepared a Report which included: the Terms of Reference proposed to the Sackville Town Council, the Committee's vision statement, its mandate, and recommendations for the next steps in realizing the project. In the strategic steps outlined in the document, the Committee identified the concept of a public input process and the organizational structure of the volunteer Board of Directors which would oversee the development of the project. One of the core recommendations was that in order for a project of this size to be successful, it must be "community based and driven" (Community Centre Committee, 1997:19). One of the ways to achieve broad community involvement was to adopt a participatory design approach.[20] Legally and politically, the Civic Centre project was to be transparent to town residents in order to justify the considerable public investment. The Civic Centre was not only to be funded by taxpayers' money, but part of the project cost was supposed to be covered directly by the residents through an increase in municipal taxes.

According to early documents relating to the Sackville Civic Centre, the

Committee's intention was to embrace public participation through informing the public about the project, and involving it directly in the planning through public consultations and Board membership. An independent, incorporated, non-profit regional Board was created in order to act as the legal body in "determining the level of public support for the facility." The expectation was that if warranted by the public the Board could "proceed with plans to finance, construct, equip, operate and maintain the facility" (Community Centre Committee, 1997:19). The Board of Directors' program of work involved coordination of the public input process. Through a public survey distributed to Sackville residents and local regional communities, written communications to community groups and organizations, articles in the media, and public meetings, the Board was to determine if the people of the Tantramar area supported the facility and what kind of facility it should become. After receiving the community's recommendations, the Board could proceed with the design stage and develop conceptual plans for the facility. Another responsibility of the Board, which proved to be more complicated than it was originally estimated, was the identification of potential funding sources for both capital and operational budgets.

The Town Council accepted this Report as the terms of a legal agreement with the organizing Committee.[21] Following the approval of the constitution of the Board of Directors by Town Council, the Tantramar Regional Civic Centre (TRCC) Board became active near the end of 1997. It had twelve members representing Town Council, the town community and its organizations, and the Village of Dorchester. The Board consisted of twelve Directors and a Chair. However, the positions were not always filled. The Directors fluctuated in number from at times nine to a full slate of twelve. There were only three formal Board members during the process to date who were female. One of these was a founding member. Two of these female members work at the Dorchester penitentiary in a nearby village, and these members represented respectively the Dorchester Village Council and the Sackville Curling Club. I was the third female Board member. In addition, there was one female advisory member who was involved in the project from the beginning. Linda represented the Sackville Parks and Recreation

Department. All Directors were local area residents. They came from various walks of life and had different income levels. Several professionals, including a government scientist and a private investigator, worked side by side with a local farmer and a retired university professor. The individuals who were asked to join the Board were selected primarily because they were involved in community social life and recreational activities, and had a keen interest in the project. The only group to have an official representative on the Board was Sackville Town Council. During some periods of the project a second Councillor served on the Board. While one university professor served as a Director for some time, the Mount Allison University administration never agreed to have an official representative on the Board. In discussions among Board members it was occasionally noted that, among other groups, students and local arts and culture enthusiasts should have been represented. Doug Miller became the Board's President and continued in this role throughout the project.

The complexities of the political situation in Sackville almost immediately found their way into the boardroom of the fledgling Civic Centre project. The first seeds of disagreement between Board members surfaced at one of the first official Board meetings during a discussion on the overall project vision. Several members defended the idea of the centre being more than just an arena, while others were interested only in the construction of the ice rink. There was another issue closely related to the arena/multi-purpose centre split. The members who advocated for a more diversified facility saw this project as a Sackville community project and not something that was dependent on the University. Feelings of local pride and long time tensions between 'town and gown' rose during the meetings. Even before the Civic Centre concept became public knowledge, the Board was divided between rink supporters and multi-purpose centre proponents.

Despite the Board's internal disagreements, conciliatory work tactics were adopted in managing the project publically. All attempts were made to contain differences of opinions within the group. At an early stage of the Civic Centre initiative, Linda, the Director of the Parks and Recreation Department, took up the task of communicating about the project to Town Council and various community groups and clubs. She worked

the official channels and maintained frequent communication behind the scenes by providing the Council with regular updates on the Board's activities. Several times the local newspaper published press releases providing 'positive' information on the progress in the Civic Centre project. Further, the Board decided to hire an outside professional consultant, John W. Meagher, for the politically contentious step of identifying the most suitable site for the Centre. This step was recognized as necessary in order to strengthen the perception of professionalism and impartiality in the planning phase of the project.

Plate 14 Mount Allison University parking lot located on Main Street close to the downtown area and campus: one of the alternative sites considered for the Civic Centre Construction

Despite the precautions taken, choosing a potential site for the facility turned out to be a serious challenge for the group. In January of 1998 the Board agreed that the site had to be chosen before collaborations with an architect would take place. The size of the site (large enough for just the arena, or for the whole Civic Centre), the ownership of the property (University or other), and the nature of occupancy (lease or own) became subjects of internal arguments. The University was willing to lease any of several of its properties. One of the most suitable and convenient University-owned locations was large

enough for the arena building only (see Plate 14).

Board member Tim Scott, a local scientist and avid soccer enthusiast, defended the reasons for acquiring a larger property and being freed from dependence on the University, arguing that "the goals and interests in a Civic Centre differ greatly between Mount Allison and the TRCC Board" (TRCCB, January13, 1998). He clearly articulated a feeling shared by a significant part of the community. Many residents had grown tired of being looked down on by the University administration and wanted "to get untangled from Mount Allison". In response to Tim's arguments, two Board members, Rod and Paul, defended a university-friendly, arena only position, resorting to arguments based on logistics. They asserted that space in Sackville to "accommodate both the [soccer] field and the arena" was limited (TRCCB, January 13, 1998). Despite the challenges to his vision, Tim managed, during early Board discussions, to establish himself as an informal leader of the group, defending the multi-purpose role of the new facility. Doug and a majority of the Board at that time supported Tim's ideas.

Council appeared to be allowing the Board to operate at arm's length on the issue of the potential Civic Centre location. Nevertheless, when the Sackville Soccer Association approached Council with a request for a new field, the Association was directed to the Civic Centre Board. This action by Council indicated that in principle it supported the idea that a variety of activities should be accommodated at the new facility. At that time, the Sackville Soccer and Football Associations were willing to raise $25,000. towards the construction of outdoor fields.

Council's role in the project later changed to reflect both the political pressures and circumstances of the day, and individual Council members' changing opinions regarding toward new development. The Civic Centre project to date coincided almost exactly with two Council terms. (It will be built under a third Council and Mayor elected in May 2001). Pat Estabrooks was elected Mayor of Sackville when the initial research and conceptual planning was conducted. She held the mayorship for just over a year (moving on to provincial politics), and was the only female in local municipal government during the last four years. Council members were predominantly local

professionals and small business owners, operators and employees. The majority were in the middle income level. Most had strong family, church and social ties within the community, winning them wide support and sufficient votes during elections. Some 'newcomers' to town, sometimes living in Sackville for nearly a decade or more, did compete occasionally for the civic posts. Despite being well liked and connected, and having fresh ideas, they were not successful in winning sufficient trust and support of the electorate. Individuals affiliated with the university, and especially faculty, were not active in civic political circles for many years. Only during Council elections in 1999 did one part time and one full time university professor win seats. However, both of these men ran for Council as 'community representatives,' frequently stressing the facts that they lived in town with their families and have close ties with town residents and other organizations, rather than emphasizing their affiliation with the university community.

Before formal consultations with community members took place, the Board spent a significant amount of time developing the project vision internally. Some of the Board members rationalized the position for a multi-purpose community centre by arguing that this type facility had a better chance of remaining financially self-sufficient. Others, on the other hand, were attempting to convince fellow members to lease one of the University-owned properties for the future rink.

A few weeks later, consultant John W. Meagher's report was presented to the Board and Council. It indicated that the best location for construction of the facility was the former Animal Pathology Laboratory site located off Main Street. This property was not owned by the University, was large enough to accommodate the Civic Centre building and the soccer fields, and was easily accessible from both downtown Sackville and the nearby Trans Canada Highway. Council approved the Main Street property as the future site for construction (see Plate 15).

Plate 15 Future site of the Civic Centre, located on Main Street between downtown Sackville and the Trans-Canada Highway

In January of 1998, reacting to the recent turn of events, the two supporters of an arena-only project resigned from the Board. This time the proponents of the multi-purpose facility had won, but internal and external divisions regarding views of the future facility were far from over. Shortly after leaving the Board, the dissatisfied participants felt free to express their opinions and tried to influence the public through the local newspaper. A critical article written by the two former Board members appeared in the Tribune-Post in February. It summarized the Board's activities to date as fiscally irresponsible and confrontational (Richard, February 4, 1998:1). The Board responded by ignoring the criticisms, and publishing an optimistic update on the progress of the Civic Centre. The "stroking strategy" (see Flyvbjerg, 1998) adopted by the Board involved persistent tactics of non-confrontation and avoidance of conflicts at any price in order to preserve within the community its own image of strength and integrity. These tactics made sense within the inner circles of Sackville and power groups including Council, the TRCC Board and local businesses leaders. It kept the otherwise fragile group of volunteer

Board members afloat for at least two and a half years.

Without a doubt, critical articles and remarks made in the press, including letters to the editor, had an impact on the community's perception of the project. People in town did not know much about the proposed development and what they heard or read was very contradictory. Several letters sent by concerned citizens to Doug Miller during 1998 indicated that local residents were anxious about the future development. The homeowners adjacent to the proposed Civic Centre site were especially nervous about the facility's impact on their lives and the value of their properties. Doug Miller met and talked to some of the property owners personally, promising to get back to them regarding their concerns. The agreement among members of the Board of Directors was that Doug was supposed to "handle this situation very carefully" (TRCCB, October 8, 1998). Councillor Ron Hounsell, who replaced one of the recently resigned Board members, also added to the continuing controversy by openly advocating for the construction of the arena as the only viable option for the project. He argued that the rink was the only facility that was really needed in Sackville and that the anticipated price tag for the whole project and consequent increases in property taxes would be too high for the community to bear.[22]

Having identified the potential construction site, the Board became interested in involving the architect in the planning and design work. However, the architect was a contracted professional charging fees for services. Arranging for the architect's early participation in the Board's regular meetings would be a complicated matter for the financially constrained group. The Board had to do its own homework before it could involve help from outside. A Building Committee chaired by Terry Baker, a local entrepreneur and hockey coach, was struck to collect information needed to prepare for the architect's input. The Committee also worked to identify a time line for design and construction stages. Along with the Building Committee, a Fund Raising Committee was struck to address issues of project funding. After several weeks Terry presented to the Board the preliminary building plan and urged the Directors to set some financial boundaries for the project. The funding breakdown discussed among the Board involved a

one third contribution coming from the federal government, one third from the province, one third contributed by the municipality through property taxes, and any remainder raised by the local community and from business sponsors.

On March 5, 1998 the Board invited local planners to attend their meeting. This was the only time the planners were directly in contact with the project initiators. Their input can be described as mere technical consultation. A Tantramar Planning Commission representative explained the existing property by-law for the proposed location. Since the site was already zoned as institutional, by-law amendments weren't needed, nor would it be necessary to hold public hearings that usually have to precede such amendments. In June of 1998 the Town of Sackville purchased the land for the Civic Centre construction for $127,000.

Acquisition of the land was a complicated but manageable issue. By contrast, the project funding was a long and frustrating process full of unfulfilled promises and desperate community attempts to seek information about scarce public funds from government bureaucrats and politicians. Earlier in the project Town Council had given the Civic Centre Board its blessing to pursue any avenues that may be open for fund raising. The freedom to act was, in this situation, not enough. As the Board began the quest, some government bureaucrats agreed to help by directing the volunteer Board members to other bureaucrats who were supposed to be key persons in resolving certain financial matters. The search for the right person or a political patron often went full circle because the Board repeatedly confronted obstructions. In September of 1998 Town Councillors pressed the Board Chair for tangible funding indications for the new facility. In response the Board made a decision to intensify its funding efforts by seeking "a major patron sponsor," an influential politician who would go with Board members to the provincial capital and lobby for the funds (TRCCB, September 1, 1998). The Board did succeed in finding such a political bureaucrat to assist in this regard, but Board members did the majority of the work, and the bureaucrat's efforts were not consistent or fruitful. The project was presented by Board members to the Premier of New Brunswick during his visit to Sackville in October of 1998. Liberal Premier Camille Theriault was at that

time gearing up for an election and promised to support the project if the town considers it a priority.

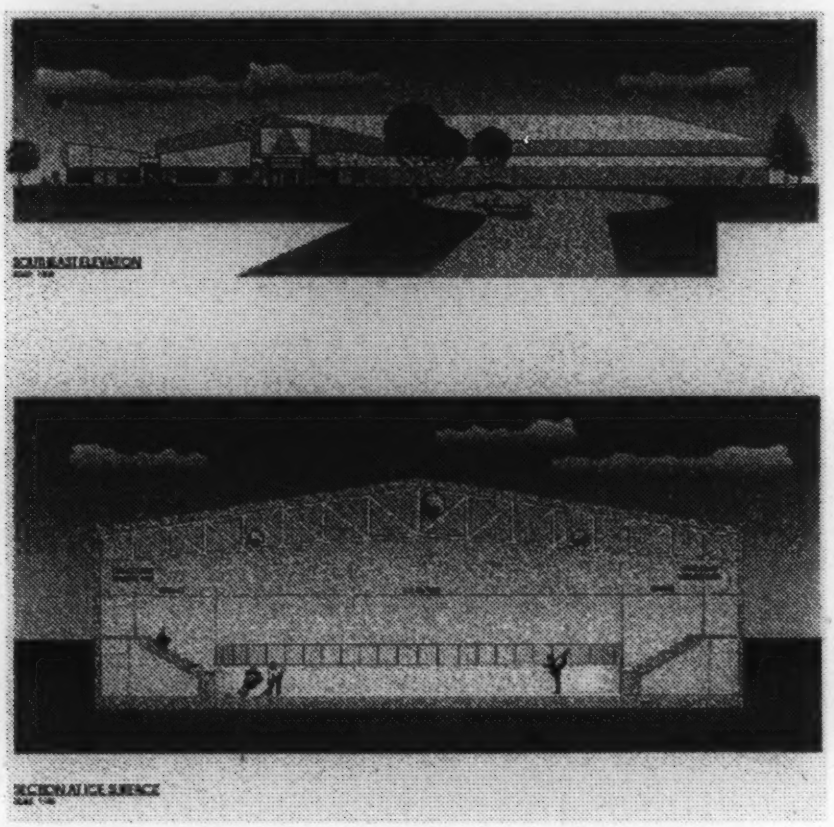

Figure 1 Conceptual design drawings for the Civic Centre: south-east elevation and section at ice surface. Architects 4, Moncton, New Brunswick

In the Spring of 1998 the Civic Centre Board decided, with Council's approval, to conduct a public search for an architect. Out of four applicants, a Moncton based architectural firm, Architects Four, was chosen to work on the project. Board and Council members were impressed by the architect's conceptual proposal which functionally and aesthetically integrated the building into the existing town neighbourhood through several

strategies. The facility was planned to be partially sunk into the ground to reduce the visual impact of the box-like shape of the rink portion of the building (see Figure 1). The proposed landscaping was intended to connect the interior public space with the outdoor surroundings and with the rest of the community through the creation of a park-like setting on the site, the introduction of paths leading to the street, and through a skilful interpretation of the 'traditional' Maritime architectural style for the entrance, a transitional space between the recreational space and the outside (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Conceptual design drawings for the Civic Centre: perspective of entry. Architects 4, Moncton, New Brunswick

In July, Council approved the architectural contract with a value of $25,000. Between early Summer and Fall of 1998, some of the detailed conceptual work was done by a select group of Building Committee members and the architect, Andrew McGillivary. The architect and the Building Committee members met on several occasions to discuss specific points of the prospectus: the size of the arena ice surface, seating in the arena, design and location of the entrance, a concession area and multi-purpose room. In October, Andrew presented updated blueprints of the Civic Centre.

Following several further discussions and consultations with the Board and Building Committee members, completed drawings of the conceptual design were prepared. These included site and floor plans, a cross-section of the arena and elevation of the facade.

The end of 1998 and beginning of 1999 were marked by intensified public consultation and outreach. The first long anticipated public meeting concerning the Civic Centre project was held in the middle of November in the packed local high school theatre. About 250 people attended this gathering. The general consensus in the community was that the meeting was a success. A newsletter containing information about the new project was sent to all residents of the neighbouring Village of Dorchester. A meeting with a local seniors organization was scheduled for January of 1999. Another meeting with Mount Allison University staff was scheduled but this did not go as well as expected. The University administration had advertised the event poorly. Only 25 employees showed up.

The TRCC Board also put considerable effort into preparing, designing and distributing questionnaires soliciting citizens' input on the proposed conceptual design. The questions asked were open ended and geared toward obtaining suggestions, thoughts and arguments. The questionnaire sheets were distributed in various town locations such as local schools, the post office building and the Town of Sackville office, and in the neighbouring communities. Most of the completed questionaries were collected at the November public meeting. The 264 completed forms indicated overall support for the facility with a rink as a component. According to an evaluation of the questionnaires conducted by Sackville based Lexiform Data Research (Campbell, December 4, 1998), a consulting company, the respondents were not chosen randomly. Therefore the representativeness of the sample was problematic. The questionnaire was too vague to determine the level of support for the new Civic Centre. Though the qualitative nature of this questionnaire rendered it less useful as an official document that would prove the support for the project, a range of town residents' emotions, wishes and expectations were revealed in the responses. My own review of the questionnaires showed the reasons behind the project's importance to some people. Many respondents endorsed the project

because they believed that the new facility would be "owned by residents", it would "draw the town closer together" and it would be accessible (see Appendix 1 and 2). For the first time the political significance of the initiative was articulated by town residents themselves. To some, the Centre was more than just a rink, playing field and a multi-purpose room. The new facility symbolized the community's self worth and ability to operate a public amenity independently. A minority of respondents were concerned about the high cost of the facility and the increased residential tax burden.

Town officials needed something more substantial to prove the community's support for the project. In January of 1999 Lexiform Data Research conducted a telephone survey. A total of 878 property taxpayers were interviewed. At the time of the survey, the official construction cost of the Civic Centre was estimated to be $ 4.6 million. The survey questions were formulated without inquiring what kind of facility should be constructed. The aim was to determine if there was support for a *multi-purpose* regional Civic Centre. The survey showed that 66% of respondents were willing to pay additional taxes to support the Civic Centre's construction. The results also revealed that the more citizens knew about the project, the stronger was their support (43% of the survey's respondents rated themselves as having little or no knowledge of the project). The question of additional taxes for support of the ongoing operation of the Civic Centre received a more even split with 53% in favour. The youngest age group surveyed (under 39) showed the highest level of support for the facility (Lexiform Data Research, January 11, 1999). Motivated by the encouraging numbers, the Town of Sackville was ready to start one of its biggest project in recent decades.

Future events proved that the survey results weren't very important. When the time was right, those in power chose to interpret the results by paying particular attention to the opinions of fiscally conservative and powerful community members who weren't so willing to sacrifice their tax dollars in order to support the project. There was little concern over the fact that a clear majority of the population was behind the project.

Looking back at the period between the end of 1997 and December of 1998, it can be argued that the group of appointed Board volunteers approached the complicated task

of initiating and planning the project with enthusiasm and a sense of responsibility for their fellow community members. I was fortunate to participate, if only partially, in this exciting stage of the project.[23] Most of the seminal ideas pertaining to the process and outcomes of the project were conceived during this time. The initial Board's vision was broad and mature. It also demonstrated an understanding of the socio-economic realities of the day. On the other hand, residents of Sackville didn't really own the project. Even with best of intentions in mind, the Civic Centre seemed to be conceived *for* Sackville residents rather than directly *by* them. This is not to say that good, popular and well liked environments can't be designed with limited citizen participation. But future events would show that public disengagement and lack of knowledge about the project had a profound influence on the Civic Centre's development. In the upcoming months the ideals of the community driven project were to be seriously tried and tested.

6.4 Stalling and other political manoeuvres

The results of public consultations with Sackville taxpayers encouraged Town Council to endorse the project and commit $1 million for the future facility. In January 1999, the Civic Centre was given a "green light" by the Town Council but, according to the press, there were "some caution lights flashing along the way" (Richard, January 13, 1999:1). Council's decision was not unanimous. Councillor Jim Purdy's opinion was that townspeople should have had a choice between the proposed Civic Centre and a rink. As there was no united front behind the project among municipal politicians, the local press took every chance to feed the public with controversial information and give voice to those who opposed the project. The Board again decided to keep the confrontations at bay by responding to negative press with regular project updates providing readers with "factual information" (TRCCB, January 21, 1999). Despite persistent application of non-confrontational tactics by the Board, fables about the Civic Centre were spreading in the community.

Letters from property owners concerned about their backyard privacy and

enforced lifestyle change did not stop either. In the same month that Town Council officially endorsed the project, residents living next to the proposed construction site sent Council a letter protesting against the facility. Increases in noise and traffic and depreciation of real estate values were emphasized as primary concerns. Another letter from a local resident received in February stated that though Sackville needs a sports complex, a cost of "four or five million dollars seems like overkill" (Lerette, January 18,1999). The Chair of the Board met most, if not all, of the people who wrote the critical letters. Doug's words of reason brought to the complainants some sense of relief, but the residents' protests weren't over yet. A petition bearing the names of 166 persons opposed to Sackville Civic Centre stirred another flurry of dissension among town Councillors. The argument behind the petitioners' opposition to the Civic Centre was that the town had not adequately informed citizens about all the details relating to the project such as adding a community centre to the rink. Then Mayor Pat Estabrooks took the lead in responding to the signatories of the petition and defended the idea of the multi-use Civic Centre. The Councillors weren't as supportive, and were not united behind the project. One Councillor made a comment in the press stating that the project did not have the unanimous support of the public right from the beginning.

On April 19, 1999 the TRCC Board and Council held a public meeting with property owners living in the vicinity of the future development. Board members made a brief and upbeat introductory presentation about the project, but the air in the Council Chambers was heavy. Soon after an invitation for discussion, concerns and questions filled the room. At the top of the list of concerns from the approximately 25 property owners present were the noise levels, traffic congestion, potential drainage problems and trespassing. One of the residents recommended nothing less than installing a six foot fence with three rows of barbed wire. The atmosphere in the Chambers was so tense that it was hard to judge if this statement was a joke or a sincere manifestation of fear of a new development in one's back yard. As the Board members were pledging to consider all the concerns, one of the residents got up and remarked that this was the first meeting arranged with the residents by the Board and Council, and "the plan is already 90 per cent

done" (Richard, April 21, 1999:1). Sadly, it was a justified remark. Board members, who had already enough problems to deal with, scrambled to find justification for the lack of face to face communication with the public. The controversy at the public meeting was promptly reflected in an article in the Tribune-Post. A journalist wrote that the "volunteer Board charged with overseeing" the construction of a $4.7 million facility was put under community's microscope (Richard, April 21, 1999:1). His comments did not elaborate further on the wider community's attitudes toward the project. Rather, his arguments and tone seemed geared toward calling into question the Board's level of ability in leading the initiative.

Acknowledging that the public meeting with the property owners was less than a political success, the Board considered and discussed with Council and the architect the issues raised by property owners. All parties agreed that moving the building further from the edge of the property would provide some breathing room for the neighbours of the Centre. Several short project updates informing the town community about the activities of the Board and the measures taken as a result of the meeting were published in the local paper.

Not all Sackville residents and groups opposed the idea of the Civic Centre. The local Kinette Club donated $14,000. to the project with only one request that they be allowed to use the future facilities for their meetings. The Sackville Track and Field Association also approached the Board Chair with the initiative to start a fundraising campaign toward assisting with the costs of an outdoor track and field facility. The Sackville Youth Soccer Association expressed eager support for the soccer field and practice fields included in the design for the Centre. According to the Association President, the organization supports over 270 players in Sackville and the surrounding communities, yet they have to juggle games and practices on only two soccer fields.

The sense of uncertainty about securing the necessary funding for the facility didn't help morale among members of the Board of Directors and Council. It was becoming painfully clear that without government contributions this project would certainly fail. The portion of town funding ($1 million) was contingent on provincial and

federal contributions. As the burden of responsibility in realizing the project became more apparent to the Sackville Town Council, its influence on the Board's activities became more overt. Many expected that a power shift in management of the project could increase chances of the Civic Centre survival. Mayor Estabrooks officially requested that Council and the Board work together on the project and secure lines of communication and cooperation. The Board was expected to provide a preliminary plan for the construction and fundraising, and regularly update Council on its activities. The collaboration between Council and the Board didn't start smoothly. Board members were reluctant to give control over the project to a divided Council. A month later Mayor Estabrooks called a special meeting at which the groups were obliged to put in writing such agreements so as to have a system of "open and up-front communication", develop a "work schedule", define financial agreements between Council and the Board, and provide information about members of the Fundraising Committee (Estabrooks, February 15, 1999). According to reflections of several members of the Board, Council at this time felt that it was left out of the project and did not really have inside information on how things were progressing. In exchange for sharing power with the Board, the town government agreed to help secure federal and provincial funds and work on involving neighbouring municipalities in support of the project.

Promises to obtain the funds for the project were easier to make than to keep. Through my direct participation in the Board's activities and meetings, and joint meetings between the Board and Council, I learned that the overall strategy for fundraising was to exercise back room politics by working the right bureaucratic channels for donations. This approach was initiated by several members of the Board, and at that time supported in general by the Board and Council. The political run-around that started in 1998 continued in the following years without much progress, but with plenty of confusion. Many letters were sent to the Premier of New Brunswick, local Members of the Legislative Assembly and the Ministry of Municipalities, Culture and Housing. At first the Board, with Council's knowledge, was told to apply for funds from the provincial Assistance Program for Major Public Projects, then, a few months later, to Human

Resources and Development Canada (HRDC). It seemed that not only Board members but also local politicians were kept in the dark about the 'real' method of applying for and receiving public funds. Town Council was manipulated particularly by the federal politicians in the form of polite and encouraging letters supporting the initiative but not offering any monetary contributions.

During May of 1999, the Board was advised by their provincial bureaucrat informant that there was not one particular funding agency within the government which would give money for the project. Rather, the funding should be sought from several departments within the provincial government. This meant that the Board had to target between seven and ten governmental sectors with specific funding applications. Considering that the whole 3.4 million had to be secured in order to break the ground on the project, a search for funds from up to a dozen agencies was neither realistic nor possible. Again, project initiators were left at ground zero. But this time an important difference was that the community had already invested in the purchase of property, hired architects and put thousands of volunteer hours into the project.

Despite continuing the search for government funding, the Board effectively lost about 250 fundraising days in the runup to the provincial election which took place in early June of 1999. Their earlier efforts were in vain because the promises of the previous Liberal government evaporated and an entirely new communication process had to be established with the newly elected Progressive Conservative party leaders.

Around this time, when everything seemed to be working against the success of the initiative, the Board decided that it had to raise the Civic Centre's profile by boosting local support for the project and involving town people in fundraising. The underlying belief was that local residents still regarded project as a good initiative, and if asked, would unite behind it. Board members agreed that at this time a move to hire a professional fund raiser (something they had been pressured by Council to consider for some time), instead of helping the project, would rather reveal the Board's lack of confidence in the community's ability to raise the necessary money. The agreement was that one "shouldn't do that in this town" (TRCCB, January 21, 1999). Only a few months

later, Council convinced the Board to hire a full time administrator to oversee communications and fundraising processes. The Town agreed to pay the administrator's salary, but this was supposed to be repaid when the funding for the project was in place.

Board member Terry took the initiative to strike a committee responsible for the local and corporate donations for the project. His vision of what would be a successful fundraising mission in this community was rather different from the Board's generally straightforward tactics of work based on open communication. Terry believed that selecting several influential business people in the community, and convincing them to become active advocates for the project, would provide some necessary status and power to the local fundraising campaign. The 'right kind' of partnerships were, in his opinion, very important to the success of the project. He regularly informed the Board about the progress of his initiative, but the names of the 'people respected in the community' were rarely mentioned, and he did not provide many details about how the Committee operated. Terry's vision of successful Fundraising Committee work had become a reality, and in the final analysis exemplified and influenced the shift in the nature of the whole project.

In the meantime, a temporary shift toward greater transparency in fundraising from government sources took place. The provincial elections in the Summer of 1999 had brought to power a whole new slate of politicians and bureaucrats. The Board decided to approach the fundraising process differently. As Tim and Doug stressed during one Board meeting, they were getting tired of going nowhere with the backroom approach and rather than going through middle people, wanted to start direct communications with government officials. To Tim in particular, the opportunity for a change meant that the group could again adopt an approach in their work that was more transparent to the public and to the project organizers themselves. With this strategy Town Council, the Mayor and the MLA would be key persons behind direct lobbying, rather than some political spin doctors that were not 'on the map' locally. In August, Tim communicated to the press that the "end decision over funding will be a political one, and the Board is trying to find the right doors to knock on" (Richard, August 11, 1999:1). Such an approach was becoming

more realistic as the local MLA was appointed to serve as a provincial Cabinet Minister and would have direct influence on provincial politics and financial decisions.

At this time, Board members agreed that as community volunteers they "simply don't have the necessary clout" to convince the governments to provide funds for the project (TRCCB, July 5, 1999). While the Board was expecting to be able to provide direction for the project, as well as information and resources, control over the project was slipping away.

In October of 1999, Warren Bryden was hired on a contract basis to serve as Administrative Coordinator for the project. The addition of a salaried employee to the Board added a much needed boost to the level of activity. Warren proposed to resurrect the work of subcommittees and provide more information about the project to the local residents. He took the initiative of displaying detailed colour drawings of the Civic Centre in several locations in downtown Sackville.

A couple of years into the project the University still had not shown any interest in joining the local partnership supporting the Civic Centre. It also chose not to publically endorse the project. For the small community of Sackville, so dependent on this institution, it was important to have the University's blessing on the development, even if it did not come with a monetary contribution. The Board knew that recent disagreements regarding the acquisition of properties for the Centre had not been helpful. The decision was made to bring the University around to the idea of the TRCC by patiently knocking on the 'back doors' of the University administration. The tactics of patience and quiet perseverance did not work. After receiving a letter from the Civic Centre Board in the Fall of 1999 asking the University to appoint a representative to serve on the Board of Directors, the University administration decided not to associate with the project. The President responded that the University would not be a "significant user of the new facility" (Newbould, October 19, 1999). He noted, however, that the University will be using 25% of the new arena's ice time. In the meantime, Doug Miller, the Allison Gardens rink Ice Maker and Chair of the Civic Centre Board of Directors, was strategically placing buckets in the old University arena to gather rain water leaking

through the roof, pondering how a more and more alienated Board could still push the project to its fruition.

In June of 1999, an official press statement announced that the Tantramar Regional Civic Centre would not be completed by the target date of January 1st, 2000. By the end of summer came the first signs of Council's push toward downsizing the project. At the joint TRCC Board and Town Council meeting on August 30th, Board members were urged to prepare a contingency plan in case the full amounts of money requested from the governments would not come in. Though it was almost impossible to estimate how much money would be expected in a partial funding scenario, Councillors seemed to have already shifted their vision of the Centre to plan 'B.' Plan 'B' meant building an ice rink only. Doug's immediate response was that if the stripped down version of the project was presented to the public, the community would not support the project. By the end of the meeting, Board members were persuaded to provide Council with a contingency plan, but refused to change the initial project mandate to build a multi-purpose civic facility.

Neither the local nor regional press were on the Board's side at this critical time. When another rink-only proponent, Councillor Ron Hounsell, resigned from the Civic Centre Board in September, he took the opportunity to express to the press his discontent about the project. The press jumped on it. The Sackville Tribune-Post reported that among the reasons for Ron's departure was his belief that the project was becoming too big and too expensive for the community. The provincial paper, the New Brunswick Telegraph Journal, published a full blown feature on the project and Ron's resignation (Poitras, September 22, 1999:1). The article title "Controversy surrounds Sackville rink proposal" indicated how public opinion was being shaped regarding the proposed facility, even though the stand-alone rink was never endorsed as a community project. The main argument was that "a $3 million rink has mutated into a $5 million 'multipurpose facility'" and that most people in the community did not support this 'mutation' because of increased taxes. The underlying theme in the article was that undertaking such an expensive project was an irresponsible step on the part of politicians, because it placed a heavy burden on the shoulders of taxpayers. Still, there were inconsistencies which were

not clarified. For example, if Council was willing to commit from the local tax base the same $1 million dollars for the construction of the rink as for the Civic Centre project, it was unclear how the residents would save money in the case of downsizing. The ethics of choosing to spend the same money for a facility which would be used by fewer residents was questionable as well. (A rink facility would accommodate almost exclusively hockey and some figure skating).

Despite strategic omissions, the grounds for downsizing were provided rather skilfully in the article. The proponents of the full Civic Centre concept within the Board were identified as "not a majority" and only "a few vocal members." The Civic Centre element of the project was described as a "costly luxury," which would be too expensive to operate in the future (Poitras, September 22, 1999:1). While it is true that public facilities seldom make a profit, it is hard to estimate how much a full Civic Centre would cost to operate. There is also no guarantee that the rink alone would break even or generate a profit. Many Board members believed that it was wiser to request funding for a larger project from the outset as subsequent requests for funding for expansions or additional phases of the Centre would likely be unsuccessful. This is why proposing a multi-purpose centre represented a rare opportunity for Sackville to build a more comprehensive civic amenity. The progress toward this goal was dramatically hindered by the appearance of the critical article in Fredericton's Telegraph Journal.

Whether the feature in this prominent regional paper was a strategically crafted political move or just an irresistible sensational and controversial news story with potential to boost readership, the timing of the article was instrumental in shaping public opinion. It came out at the same time as Council was pressuring the Board to downsize the project. Further, town Mayor Pat Estabrooks, who was generally supportive of the Civic Centre concept, was leaving her post to work as an assistant to the local MLA. The new Mayor, Jim Long, was preparing to assume the Mayorship. Mayor Long was subsequently quoted in the Fredericton paper article as saying that if the funds for the project are not secured, "maybe we should lower our sight a bit and go for an arena." He openly supported "scaling back the plan" for the Civic Centre (Poitras, September 22,

1999:1).

Project initiators were finding it difficult to deal with the contradictory nature of local attitudes toward public amenities, the complex power struggle between the forces for change and those for continuance of old traditions, and the overall lack of leadership in the face of the challenges of the day. As some Board members noted, difference of opinions and open discussion were supposed to be part of the public design process. Yet when the funding decisions are in the hands of politicians who are wary of public controversy, and are offering funding in exchange for votes, the lack of unanimity can only scare the donors away.

Good ideas and sound designs can fail for many reasons. Sackville's project had many ways to fail: no timely financial support from provincial and federal governments, a lack of united political leadership, the press shaping public opinion as it describes the project as a controversial endeavour, and the attitude of the majority of the citizens who, while generally supportive of the Civic Centre concept, decided not to oppose moves toward downsizing. In an environment not conducive to rapid change, this project had nonetheless developed sufficient resilience to avoid outright failure. Rather than collapsing, it morphed into a different type of initiative. It became a more realistic and fiscally attainable, but also a more limiting, type of project.

6.5 Implementation of the project

The end of 1999 marked the beginning of the third stage of the project. The time had come to shake away the dreams of opening the Civic Centre on January 1st, 2000 and plunge into the reality of constructing an ice rink at some point in the near future.

During December of 1999, Town Council requested that the Board contact the architect and figure out how to downsize the project while allowing for future additions to the building. According to the architect, such a change was easy to achieve because the plan for the arena section was initially based on use of a pre-engineered building, while the community centre spaces were to be custom built additions to the rink. By mid-

January the architect introduced a proposal to modify the project. Design and construction of the facility was divided into two phases. The 'civic centre' portion of the building was severed from the arena. While the talk was still about two Civic Centre phases, Doug expressed his disillusionment, pointing out that the only phase realized will be phase 'one,' the ice rink. The Board's Chair remained one of the few vocal members who still adhered to the initial idea of the project. However, his influence on further events became rather limited.

Soon after Council started overtly pressuring the Board to downgrade the project, Doug lost one of his most enthusiastic and influential supporters. Board member Tim Scott decided to resign, leaving the project altogether. He openly supported the concept of a multi-purpose facility, complete with civic centre and soccer fields, and did not want to end up participating in a project that turned out to be very different from the one he joined. Just before Tim resigned from the Board, several fiery exchanges of opinions between the proponents and opponents of the more comprehensive Civic Centre took place. Through these exchanges core disagreements were highlighted: disagreements relating to public life, issues of public space, and methods through which the politics of the democratic process ought to be realized. In an e-mail message to all Civic Centre Board members, Tim stated that from the very beginning of the project he was opposed to operating in a "back room style." He also felt that Council had pushed the Board aside from major decision making while Council "was making compromises on the nature of the project." (Scott, May 2, 2000). Tim opposed in principal the abandonment of the project mandate to build a multi-purpose facility, which had been endorsed by Council and the community.

In response to Tim's views, newly appointed Board member and Councillor Shawn Mesheau blamed Tim for pursuing his personal agenda, and in particular, promoting the soccer fields as part of the centre.[24] Shawn also defended the 'rink' approach, saying he is accountable to the taxpayers, and this was the only fiscally responsible option.

With Tim's departure, the power balance within the Board shifted from

proponents of the Civic Centre toward the 'fiscal realists' supporting arena construction. Tim's resignation was a moment during my participation in the project when I felt compelled to take a stand and defend a fellow Board member's ideas. For better or worse, neither my arguments supporting openness and democratic principles of the design process, nor my call for reconciliation, received much response. I could not persuade the majority.

In the next few months, Council's control over the project was further tightened. The Mayor asked to be informed about the Board's activities and internal discussions through having access to the Board meeting minutes. Town Council assigned its representatives to the Finance and Building Committees and established direct contact with the architect. The justification for this power shift came from Mayor Jim Long himself. He was quoted by a Sackville Tribune Post reporter as stating that the volunteer Board "got bogged down. Things seemed to stall until this year when we, the Town, got more involved and recognized the fact that the Board was struggling" (Scott-Wallace, January 5, 2000:2).

Council masterfully used its privileged position of power. It directed the Board to make an official announcement declaring that there would be a phased approach to the Civic Centre design and construction. This decision had to appear to be formulated by the Board itself. In return, Town Council promised to lend funds for the architectural drawings. In February of 2000, the Board and Council officially commenced the project. The public was informed that the project would be completed in two stages. During the Council session at which the release of funds for the architectural drawings for the arena part of the project was approved, ex-Board member and still Councillor Ron Hounsell expressed the wish that "people would shut up about a civic centre." He maintained that the community might get a civic centre but only after it has a rink constructed. "I think that's the view of Council but they don't have the guts to say it," Hounsell said (Sackville Town Council, February 21, 2000). While other Councillors were more careful about the formulation of their statements, they did not openly disagree with Ron.

The Sackville Tribune-Post was quick to confirm and warrant the change in the

project's direction, commenting that Council, the Board and "likely most residents of the region" considered the construction of the rink a priority anyway (Scott-Wallace, February 23, 2000:4). The official wording of the announcement of the decision to release $1 million of local funds for the project, to be opened by the Winter season of 2000-2001, still included the name "Civic Centre."[25]

The case presented by one Sackville Tribune-Post reader defending the concept of a community centre appeared in the 'Letters to the Editor' section in March of 2000. It seemed to be in dissonance with the apparent shift in public priorities regarding the new development. The letter directly stated that Sackville is a "good community that lacks a community centre." The author of the letter emphasized that Sackville at this time had a rare opportunity "to build a multi-purpose centre which could serve a broad section of the community" (Campbell, March 1, 2000:5). Another letter to the editor from a long term resident of Sackville (now living in Fredericton), published just a week later, aimed to put things back into perspective. It stated that this town is a small place and people might not be able to afford the cost of a community centre. Community groups can more easily meet in places such as the basement of the Public Library, the United Church parlours, the Lions Club and the local High School (Miller, March 8, 2000:5). Going beyond this call for maintenance of the status quo in the community, other letters indicated that the Civic Centre project was decidedly a move in a wrong direction for the town. One of the older residents expressed his desire to see the return of industry to the region and the town rather than development of amenities supporting retirement living, recreation and tourism. In his view "it would be a pleasure to see Sackville returning to the way it once was 40 to 50 years ago" (Balser, May 10, 2000:4).

A Sackville Tribune-Post editorial which appeared in May clearly showed the paper's attitude toward the project and its initiators. It was public knowledge that strong support for the community centre concept remained within the Board and the community. However, the editor stated that "organizers were right to redesign the concept to only include the arena portion, now it may be time for a name change for the Tantramar Civic Centre Board" (Scott-Wallace, May 17, 2000:4).

With revised goals and new players taking active steps in the project's realization, the design and fundraising work gained a new momentum. Terry, with help from Administrative Officer Warren, revitalized the local Fundraising Committee. The group consisted of community business leaders and "other connected people" (Fund Raising Committee, January 25, 2000). During regular fundraising strategy sessions, local business representatives prepared to present their approach to Council. All efforts were focussed on promoting the benefits of the future rink. At the same time, long term strategies for the development were getting fuzzier. In one of the press releases issued by the Board, Warren indicated that the rink had to come first, and the civic centre would follow when the community decided to do it (Scott-Wallace, May 17, 2000:1-2). The future possibility of the 'civic' part of the centre was still implied, but not nearly as assuredly as some of the Board members, and Doug in particular, would have wished. For Warren it was not an easy situation to balance. The project administrator was appointed at the time when the project was downgraded. He had to deal with pressures coming from Council politicians, local business owners, and a debilitated but still functioning Board.

Regular Building Committee meetings resumed by mid-February of 2000. Architect Andrew McGillivary, Board members, representatives from Council, and Town staff were participating in this stage of the design. Since the multi-purpose role of the facility had been dropped, the group had the clear objective to effectively downsize the project and prepare for the construction phase. The ice rink became the focus of the group's work. Since the controversies surrounding the role of the project were cleared, the group was able to communicate with the architect productively and constructively. Beyond the cuts to the overall design there were several issues that had to be re-negotiated and resolved. One of these issues was fitting the arena to the $3.4 million price tag. The Committee's wish was to build the best arena this amount of money could buy. After a review of several building options, it was decided to opt for the rink component with the addition of the originally proposed entranceway to the building. This added a little character to the otherwise boxy structure. Most of the interior was designed to accommodate team sports (in particular hockey games and practices) and the spectators.

On the upper concourse area of the arena there were plans for a walking track, but its construction was contingent on sufficient funds. Particular attention was paid to specific arena issues such as provision for equipment storage in the building, location of dressing rooms, and arena seating. Terry, Chair of the Building Committee, was clearly in control of the process of group negotiations. His personal interest in the arena (he was a hockey coach in the local junior league) likely had an impact on the outcomes of the Building Committee's work.

Despite the architect's overall design concept being cut down dramatically, he remained tactful and accommodating throughout the planning process. Andrew accepted the decision to reduce the cost of the proposed facility and agreed to rework the project to suit the demands of the day, still giving people "the most bang for their buck" (Building Committee, March 21, 2000). Community centre spaces were removed from the project's first stage plans. Andrew developed a more efficient ice rink design without sacrificing the overall quality of the building. While working on a bare bones budget, the architect tried to include the site work into the total project price. But when he presented the final budget estimates to the Building Committee, the Committee realized it could not afford the landscaping and integration of the building into the neighbourhood. This would likely have to wait for additional funds. The decision to reduce the scope of the project and exclude the landscaping and non-rink public facilities has certainly transformed the function of the centre. It also changed dramatically the appearance of the building and its surroundings. To the majority of town residents, the initial integrated design had had much aesthetic appeal.

In the meantime Council was still scrambling to secure public financial contributions. Its aim now was to ask for funds only for the construction of the arena and to keep the civic centre portion of the project out of the picture. According to internal discussions, Council believed that while both governments supported the project in principle, the funds would be released only for the rink. The rest of the money would have to be raised from donations or the tax base. Sackville, according to Town officials, was merely one of a few small municipalities competing for money from the same pot.

Governments were not going to fund something that appeared to be more than a bare recreational necessity. This assumption was based more on Council's understanding of the current political situation than on the common sense opinion of many public administrators, architects and planners who did not consider highly specialized buildings such as ice arenas as profitable as, or as popular as, multi-use community centres. Finally, the bureaucrats from the provincial and federal governments no longer had to deal with the civic centre option. The funding dilemma was resolved for them by Town officials.

One of the individuals arguing in favour of a more comprehensive and flexible Civic Centre concept was a Town employee who had long term experience in running recreational programs in the community and a good knowledge of regional trends relating to the use of public amenities similar to the one proposed for Sackville. During our conversation she maintained that if the governments are serious about sustainable and financially viable development, the subsidizing of specialized facilities such as ice arenas in a small community like Sackville should not continue. Her views, however, were not made public.

As Council's political manoeuvring took place, Doug was 'caught' mentioning the earlier vision and the price tag of the multi-purpose Civic Centre to a regional newspaper reporter. Doug contended that he just tried to answer questions about the project "honestly and upfront" (TRCCB, April 18, 2000). Apparently Doug wasn't informed clearly enough that Council had abandoned the idea of the complete project. Doug's honesty and unwillingness to read between the lines infuriated Council and local bureaucrats. Sackville politicians were worried that the mere mention of the original project and its price could make the provincial and federal governments look bad. These governments' potential donations of $1 million each could be interpreted as only partial contributions to a bigger project.

In this instance, Doug didn't have the same freedom of expression as Councillor Ron Hounsell. Doug was told that from now on he should deal with the press only through Administrative Officer Warren Bryden. In response to this order, Doug openly considered leaving the project, just as Tim Scott had done a couple of months earlier. It

was hard to determine whether the local politicians persuaded him to remain as Chair of the Board, or if he still believed that control over the project could be regained once the political turmoil settled. Whatever the case, Doug remained an official representative for the project.

While taking a 'more realistic' approach to the new development, Council pressured the Board to commence the local fundraising campaign. The hope again was that a display of local commitment to the facility would encourage the governments to release their monetary contributions. Council even suggested that "it is not unreasonable to expect that up to $1.5 million may have to be raised though fund-raising as quickly as possible" (Campbell, March 28, 2000).

In spite of Council members replacing Board volunteers in lobbying the government for funding, not much changed in the politicians' delaying their decision making. In March of 2000, Federal Minister of Labour, Claudette Bradshaw, informed Town Council and the TRCC Board that Regional Economic Development Agency (REDA) funds allocated for the province would not be the source of Civic Centre funding as had been expected for some time. She however directed the project organizers toward another funding source: the Infrastructure Program announced by the federal government. During meetings with town politicians, Board members remarked on how humiliating it was to wait for any definitive response from the government. A refusal to give funds, according to some, would have been a more honest and respectable way of communicating. Councillor Geoff Martin criticized the federal government for disengaging from communities such as Sackville. He claimed the provincial Conservatives entice communities with direct tax cuts, which in turn get 'eaten up' by shrinking unconditional grants to the municipalities. The federal government, according to Geoff, might not be as interested in supporting the Sackville project because it is not as 'hot' politically as, for example, the cleanup of the Halifax, Nova Scotia, harbour (TRCCB, May 2, 2000).

As had happened many times before, the complaints stayed in the Board room. The official line of action was to keep sending inquiry letters and wait politely for the

funds. The common understanding was that if one waits long enough, the time for the next election could approach, and then the same politicians who were unresponsive or evasive will come back to buy votes. During one of the discussions about federal and provincial funding, town CAO Barbara Campbell asked the Board to be patient a little bit longer. Doug, agreeing in principle to go along with the official agenda commented with regret that "it is the history of this town to be conservative and be so laid back" (TRCCB, May 10, 2000).

By April of 2000 it became clear that yet another project completion deadline would not be met. The hope that the facility would be built in the Fall of 2000 was fading. Without provincial or federal funding Town Council was unable to receive its $1 million share from the Municipal Borrowing Board and was forced to wait for the next borrowing deadline. Breaking ground was now possible only in the Spring of 2001. When it seemed things could get no worse, local Progressive Conservative MLA Peter Mesheau made a personal promise to seek $1 million from the provincial government and strongly encouraged the local community to start their own fundraising. The semi-official announcement re-invigorated the local drive to proceed with the completion of the project.

The official launch of the Civic Centre campaign took place at the end of June. In his opening speech, Doug Miller appealed to the community's sense of national tradition when endorsing the rink's appropriateness as a recreational centre. He said that "in Canada, ice rinks are like apple pie and ice cream" (Dobson, July 5, 2000:1). The official position explaining the downsizing of the project was reiterated through Warren Bryden. The project administrator was quoted recalling that Board members themselves realized that the "project was just too big to be constructed in one lump." For fundraising purposes it was still important not to let the idea of the full Civic Centre completely drop out of the picture. This is probably why the local MLA emphasized, if somewhat ambiguously, that he saw the project "as much more than just a rink" (Dobson, July 5, 2000:1). Only the future will tell whether this was an expression of hope for 'phase two' or a politically motivated attempt to take credit for 'more than just a rink.'

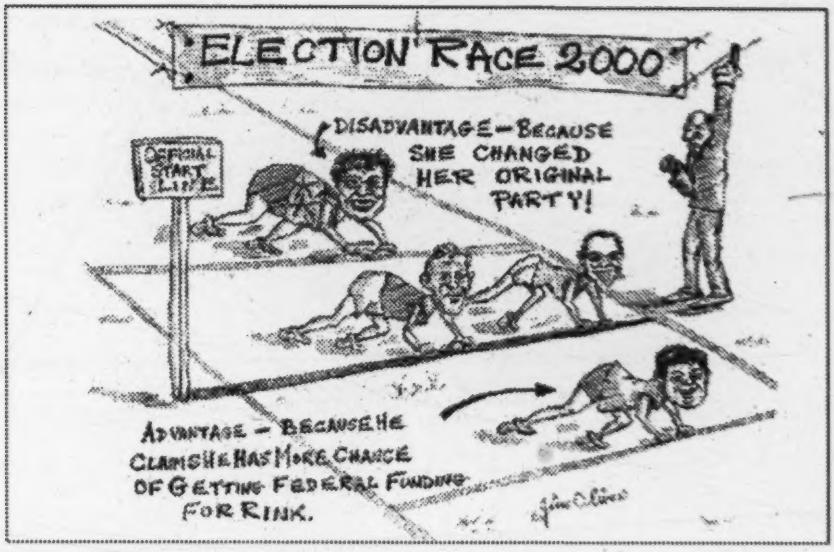
ELECTION RACE 2000
DISADVANTAGE – BECAUSE SHE CHANGED HER ORIGINAL PARTY!
OFFICIAL START LINE
ADVANTAGE – BECAUSE HE CLAIMS HE HAS MORE CHANCE OF GETTING FEDERAL FUNDING FOR RINK.

Figure 3 Jim Oliver. Editorial Cartoon. The Sackville Tribune-Post. November 22, 2000:4.

In October of 2000, when the federal election was called and federal Progressive Conservative party leader Joe Clark was campaigning in the area, provincial Conservatives made the official announcement to the Sackville public that they were contributing $1 million to the rink. Having past this particular fundraising milestone, it was now hoped that the federal government's contribution would follow. Many eyes were on the reigning Liberal party and their local candidate, Dominic LeBlanc, who was favoured to win the election. LeBlanc had indicated in a pre-election press release that if elected, he thought he would be in a "good position to help" with the rink project. "Now it's up to people of the riding to decide who they think is best to go after that federal money," LeBlanc added (Scott-Wallace, November 8, 2000:3). The candidate maintained that he was the man closest to the locus of federal power and the money. At least one Sackville Tribune-Post reader noted in a letter to the editor that voting for the Liberal party was presented to the public as voting for their rink, and that the "old school politics, based on patronage and connection [were] still being played in the riding of Beausejour-

Petitcodiac" (Fullerton, November 15, 2000:4). Pre-election fever had brought the project a provincial contribution. Sadly, it seemed that only electoral manoeuvring could secure the federal money for the project (see Figure 3).

Warren and Terry pursued the fundraising campaign while the rest of the Board faded into the background. From the Summer of 2000 until the time of this writing there were no Board meetings held. Feeling a little left out, I decided in the early Fall to meet with Warren and catch up on current developments. Warren confided during one of our conversations that he was getting tired of being a mediator between Council, Terry and the rest of the Board. According to his evaluation, the Fundraising Committee did not trust the Board. Board volunteers were "just dreamers bouncing off the wall" and did not have enough expertise to run this project anymore (Bryden, September 15, 2000). It was hard to hear these words, especially knowing how many cumulative years of volunteer labour and sincere effort were dedicated to this initiative. The Board's qualifications in coordinating the project weren't really an issue, rather it was the following events and various power struggles that compromised its relative influence on the project. The Civic Centre Board's role was downgraded from active to mere symbolic leadership.

For the rest of the project, Warren and Terry became the voices and often the faces representing the initiative. Terry reported on the fundraising campaign at a Council meeting in September, saying that "a lot of work was being done behind the scenes" (Scott-Wallace, September 27, 2000:1). He sounded confident that local businesses and regional corporations would back the project. The Fundraising Committee made a decision to place in the local paper photographs of donors who contributed $1,000 or more to the rink.

Not a single negative article about the new rink has appeared in the press since. Rather, editorials were relating "exciting news" about fundraising, and calling community members "to come together and show their spirit" in financing the arena (Scott-Wallace, September 27, 2000:4). Words about the second phase of the project were gradually fading from the vocabulary of the newspaper editorials, and from reported interviews with project donors and organizers. Everything now depended on a sufficient federal

contribution and a successful local fundraising campaign. At last the local government, the press, the provincial bureaucrats, local businesses and good portion of town residents united behind the project. This project was of course very different from the one started several years ago.

By the end of 2000 it was becoming increasingly clear that even if the arena was not completed, it has reached a significant degree of resolution. The rink was approaching its construction phase. The political and social situation in the community had stabilized, if only temporarily. The future may bring new individuals, different funding fortunes and renewed interest in public amenities, and the Civic Centre might some day become a reality. The only certain thing was that there are many lessons to be learned from the Sackville experience.

In my sustained involvement in this complex and convoluted project it was difficult to remain objective and impartial. As a Board member and a Sackville resident I wanted to see the idea of the Civic Centre realized, and my only personal regret is that I was unable to make a more dramatic impact on the outcomes of the project.[26]

As I have maintained in the preceding chapters, a collage of interdisciplinary knowledge is integrated in the description of the project and especially in discussing effects of the initiative. Parallel reflections on aspects such as regional economic background and developmental policy generation, an analysis of power groups and character of their interaction in the community, and a review of political processes of the day are central in advancing discussion on the social impacts of design practice.

In the following discussion I will not focus on the long term merits of the Sackville Civic Centre, but rather evaluate the *process* of design. The Civic Centre design process in itself has value to its initiators, supporters and even opponents, and should prove a useful example to broader communities involved in similar undertakings. My analysis will accentuate the social impact of design as a communal practice. I will delve deeper into discussion about reasons for the Sackville project's dramatic transformation over these few years. I will identify specific circumstances and historical, cultural and social patterns which simultaneously shaped the development of the project, and are

likely to have important implications beyond this particular case.

It is important to remember that the particular example of the Sackville project contains unique features which cannot be abstracted and 'fit' into a segment of an all encompassing theory. Rather, through savouring human experience and appreciating how particulars and generalities shape certain outcomes, I hope to reveal valuable information through association rather than induction.

7.0 CHAPTER 6: Discussion

An evaluation of the Civic Centre initiative, further articulation of project contexts, and an examination of the role of various power groups involved in this project, will provide answers to the question of how we can gain a better understanding of the relationship between a community and its built environment and how design can become more effective in making these relationships work better.

Social context and history profoundly influence the actions and attitudes of groups and institutions involved in the implementation of complex design projects. In Sackville, the social composition, power relationships and political practices constitute broad cultural and social constraints which affected the project.

The complicated and multifaceted nature of the Civic Centre project at times made me wonder if this case represented more a unique than a commonplace community-based design initiative. The 'bigger picture' however became increasingly evident closer to the end of the third year of my involvement in this development as I collected data on similar projects in the region and the country, and started sharing my Sackville experiences with individuals and colleagues outside of the immediate town community (see Poitras, 2000 and Winder, 1998). One such occasion to compare notes took place during a flight to a conference. I started chatting with a passenger who shared with me her experiences of coordinating a community health care facility project in a small Saskatchewan town. I was startled to find out how similar to my own were her concerns regarding the community's divided attitudes toward the new public development. While project funding from government sources was not as problematic as it was the Sackville case, building town residents' trust and sense of involvement in the new project was identified as one of the biggest challenges. In order to raise the local portion of funding from town and immediate area taxpayers, project leaders had to ensure that most of the community agreed with the goals of the initiative, and understood and acknowledged the future benefits of the long term care facility for senior citizens. After an almost two hour conversation my fellow passenger and I agreed that the degree of success or failure in

projects such as ours depended on the ability of these communities to nurture project leaders who would be able to build the community's capacity to participate in the design and to see the development through the hoops of public funding process, bureaucratic approval and local fundraising efforts. An important part of such leadership meant establishing the supremacy of communal participatory democracy over bureaucratic authority in determining the ends and means of the design project.

Of course, the concrete Sackville setting and history have contributed to particular problems that arose during the Civic Centre design. One of these was the uneasy relations between the University on one side, and some town residents and the Town Council on the other. The inability of these groups to create and maintain open and constructive dialogue weakened the communicative process and the outcomes of the project itself. On a more general note, the sometimes rather agonizing and frustrating Sackville Civic Centre project embodied patterns of power relations that often form during a problem solving process. As in many projects and initiatives requiring participation and input from several stakeholders, groups or communities with diverse value systems, goals and aspirations, the development of the Civic Centre design revealed with renewed clarity how distortions in participation and communication affect the design process and the various participants who are excluded or not properly included in the decision-making. By exposing these shortcomings in the design deliberations I believe I was able to reach some of my emancipatory goals and contribute to critical research through evaluation of social practices in a particular design instance which also bears relevance to the broader context of design practice.

The discussion and findings of my dissertation support some of Habermas's (1984, 1987) key ideas about the necessity to nurture 'communicative action' and 'communicative rationality' as a vehicle and a procedural ethic in order to arrive at democratic and inclusive decisions in problem solving. The communicative action, as described by Habermas, is aimed at reaching an understanding and mutual agreement between the participants in the deliberation process. In order to be successful this communication should be free from coercion and the consensus should be constructed on

rational grounds, rather than on a basis of tradition. Recognizing the contradictory and conflict ridden nature of modern society, such a goal as communicative action, as well as Habermas's concept of an 'ideal speech situation,' are unattainable ideals. However they offer a compelling orientation in dealing with the ethics of deliberative problem solving, concentrating on the *how* of the moral choice, rather than on the *what* of it.

After months of participation in and reflection on the project I began to realize that as much as I wanted to see the Civic Centre built, the quality of the design process itself and its impact on the community surfaced as the issues of upmost importance. It became easier to view the problems encountered during the development of the community centre not as dismal failures but more as valuable lessons that could inform about opportunities and limitations of a socially inclusive design process. Scrutinizing the conditions under which the design debate proceeded revealed the distortions in the communication process and the forces that caused such distortions. A primary goal of my research was to seek answers as to how these problems could be overcome. At the same time I would pay close attention to the conditions through which compromise and consensus in design communication could be reached and raise the awareness of and about those who are routinely excluded from such communication processes.

One of the lessons learned through reflection on the case was that public affairs are disproportionally dominated by formal bureaucratic and technocratic governmental mechanisms. This imbalance preclude people from perceiving design projects as arenas for deliberation, discussion and choice. As I aim to reveal in my study, these mechanisms and problem solving approaches are entrenched in many levels of government, regional and local administration, and the University. In the community centre project design related issues and problems were often seen as technical problems to be solved by experts such as government bureaucrats, technical assistants, architects and construction specialists who more often than not employed purposive-rational action. The administrators and bureaucrats not only ignored certain opinions of residents, but actively constructed the design problem and its goals in such a way as to agree with their own interests and needs. The reliance on technocratic control deprived the community of

opportunity, and to some extent motivation, to participate in the design initiative. The apparent problem of disparity between the strategic and the communicative modes of action should not however be seen as an antagonistic struggle of opposites. Institutions and organizations such as Sackville Town Council, with the help of local planners, for example, could have appropriated principles of communicative rationality more effectively which in turn would have promoted a more open, consensus based and constructive design dialogue between the community and government organizations.

7.1 Communal ties and conformity: forces behind design decision making

One of the powerful elements that shaped the community's and individual project participants' attitudes toward the new development, and shaped more generally views of public space and interaction in town, was a strong inclination toward communal conformity. This factored into many important decisions regarding transformations to the built environment.

Considering the relative scale and impact of the Civic Centre project on the community, it is suggested that the development constituted a major socio-physical transformation. The implementation of significant changes in a small town can often be a difficult engagement. Cohesion, consistency and compromise are the cornerstones of civic equilibrium in Sackville. In this project, the dramatic experiences of a few community leaders confirmed the challenges facing individual reformers acting in conservative social environments. For example, Board leader Doug Miller's ties to the community profoundly influenced his decision making process. Despite his sincere commitment to the initial project idea, he was compelled to strike major compromises as he faced public and Council's pressure to abandon the concept of a multi-purpose Civic Centre. He did not feel free to drop out completely. Doug felt a responsibility to finish the project in one form or another. Despite his crumbling dreams and growing cynicism, concession was the only realistic route of action for him if he was to remain an accepted and respected member of the community.

Board member Tim had not compromised. He remained faithful to the initial project concept, and left the Board when downsizing seemed inevitable. That said, Tim is an enthusiastic and intelligent individual who was able to comprehend the present, envision the future of the community and formulate clear directives on how a better future could be achieved. Tim, like Doug, did not have the necessary institutional and political support to see the dream realized. After leaving the project, Tim admitted that he probably won't be getting involved in Sackville projects in the same way. He had given several years to the Civic Centre initiative, had risked too much, and received very little in return. According to Tim, in this small town he will be viewed and judged as a person who lost a battle. The arguments and reasons won't be very important, but the memory of how he had stirred the dust will linger for a long time (Scott, September 15, 2000).

The community's traditionalism played a counterproductive role in the Civic Centre project and severely limited the possibilities for a qualitative transformation of the public realm (see also Putman, 1993; Flyvbjerg, 1998). Despite the negative effects, strong traditional ties and conservatism should nevertheless be evaluated as important complex and multifaceted attributes of the community. Many Sackville families have a deep sense of rootedness in the place and culturally define themselves as different from the surrounding Acadian population in the region. Local residents whose ancestors resided in the area for almost two centuries maintain their identity often through resistance to economic domination and cultural influences of larger urban centres such as Moncton, New Brunswick. Clinging to tradition, in this respect, can be considered as a means of coping with inevitable change and, possibly, retaining something along the way that would be otherwise lost.

7.2 Power groups and individuals shaping the community's relationship toward the development

Provincial and local political practices, and the actions of local groups and individuals in the project, were instrumental in the development of the Civic Centre

initiative. It is important to note that these factors are not divorced from broader cultural and historic contexts, but rather, are conditioned by them. Understanding of these contexts is helpful in identifying the ways in which similar design situations could be approached more effectively and responsibly.

The more than century-old traditions in relations between local government, the University, the local business community and provincial politicians, and the ways these groups have established and maintained power, complicated the introduction and hindered the development of this ambitious project. The tensions between each group's respective interests and ethical frameworks overtly and covertly influenced the Civic Centre design. Though the scale and the importance of the development demanded that the various power groups in town rise to the challenge and revise ways of collaborating and relating to each other, this did not happen. Instead, these groups generated their own interpretations of events relating to the project, and turned these readings into *their truth* about the initiative. For example, the University saw this project as an opportunity to get out of the ice rink business. Many town Councillors, by contrast, were looking forward to obtaining public funds and building a rink which would be owned and managed by the municipality.

According to Jos Boys (1998:209) "social groups place themselves in relation not only to financial but also to cultural capital." This is very true in the community of Sackville where social and cultural affiliations are frequently expressed though views and opinions rather than through material displays of prestige. Informal social groups such as established local families, as well as formal organizations, aim to contain cultural capital in the forms that sustain stability and their dominant positions within the community. From the perspective of many dominant players, the introduction of a new project was viewed as fixing something that was not broken. On the other side of the spectrum is a significant part of the community which is, by choice or necessity, highly dependent on local recreation, and regarded this project as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to participate in the initiation of an important public amenity for Sackville.

The relative ineffectiveness of the project leaders' efforts, and of my own efforts

for that matter, in mobilizing the town community toward a constructive participatory dialogue and our failure to balance successfully the strategic, technical and deliberative processes of the design are my main regrets concerning my involvement in this initiative. I couldn't influence some Board and Council members to set aside their personal or group preferences and expand the degree of tolerance needed to resolve the differences of opinions and open the discussion to a broader spectrum of Civic Centre users. Although I was deeply involved in the community's life, I had to concede that local residents did not see me as a Sackville native. I also was considered as belonging more to the academic community than the town, and therefore had limited chances to gain a strong leadership position during these several years. Even if I had been given a chance to assume a more pronounced role in the project, this would have likely been met with a degree of reservation among local residents. To make the most use in this project of my design knowledge and other professional experience I had to be careful not to create a perception that I was imposing another academic-didactic approach toward meeting first and foremost my own personal research agenda.

In retrospect I would conclude that while the research component of my thesis developed as well or even better than I had hoped, my direct participation in the design of the Civic Centre was constrained by the specific socio-political project setting. Only on a few occasions was I able to make significant contributions to the Board and the Council discussions, bringing a certain degree of reflexivity to the deliberation process, and using directly the knowledge and deeper understanding of issues that resulted from my research.

Looking into the future, I contend that if we agree that rationalizing and democratizing design communication is one of the designer's responsibilities, researchers can and should be able to better balance the discursive and strategic design goals. They should feel enabled to shift the emphasis from research and reflection toward action depending on the particular circumstances of a design project and the social-professional role of the design researcher in the setting. Managing such a balancing act would prove in practice that the emancipatory role of design is achieved in part through analysis and evaluation of forms of relationship and communication.

Successful leaders for the project had persons who were involved in town life for years (preferably for decades), familiar to most town residents, and at the same time able to overcome powerful constraints of local traditions and existing power relations in order to bring a divided community, professionals and administrators to the negotiating table. Integral to successful leadership in steering the design process would be an ability to set aside a 'safe' and impersonal position of objectivity in favour of more involved and direct working methods. This facilitation should have ensured that marginalized opinions about the project were given fair hearing along with the more vocal groups which supported the rink-only alternative. This would have had to be accomplished in order to meet another great challenge in the community: preventing growth of discontent that stemmed from a common conviction that much of the project was dominated by bargaining among the elite, trade-offs, and pressure tactics. A combination of personal communication skills and an ability to be self-reflective about one's social embeddedness in immediate professional interests or communal ties would have been desirable in a leader for this project. In the Sackville case, an individual leader could have been an architect or one of the Board members or even the local MP. Considering the funding and the community's stake in the development of the Civic Centre, the formal powers of such community facilitator would still be limited. Therefore the authority would ultimately rest on the quality of the discursive process. My own participation in the Civic Centre Board and other project related activities would have brought more benefits to the community if such a leader had surfaced during these few years.

7.2.1 Mount Allison University

From the project's inception, an institution with major economic power in the community, Mount Allison University, and its leaders in particular, did not collaborate in the development of the Civic Centre. At the outset, the University administration offered to lease land for the construction of the facility, but that was the extent of their engagement with the project. University officials did not present the community with

satisfactory justification for their lack of involvement other than stating that students weren't expected be significant users of the facility. The lukewarm support of a powerful local institution lowered the credibility of the initiative in the eyes of those who consider seriously the endorsements of large organizations and businesses.

Mount Allison's decision was indicative of a more pervasive and enduring separation from the rest of the town. The University's distance from the community manifests itself in many ways. One of these is the management and monitoring of its own territory as a distinct entity within the town.[27] The main campus is located on a hill in the very centre of Sackville. Over the years the University has purchased and now owns a significant number of local properties. According to administrative agreements, it is not obligated to consult or notify the town government about the demolition of buildings on its property, even when the structures have historic, architectural or cultural value to the community. One of the buildings torn down by the University in 2000 was Hess House.[28] According to one of my acquaintances, a woman who lived in this town most of her life, Hess House may not have been architecturally valuable, but it was once the home of people who contributed greatly to this community and the whole country. As she pointed out, "one day you see the house, and another, it's gone and in place of it there is a newly-laid lawn. Nobody could have guessed that over night a piece of local history would be demolished" (Baker, June 12, 2000).

The function and aesthetic of the University spaces reinforce the physical and social distinction from the town. Their manicured uniform landscaping and signature buildings appear to deepen the symbolic separation of 'town and gown.' A Sackville resident once reminded me that the University and town separation - symbolic, spatial and social - is especially noticeable to people who are new to Sackville. The locals, as I have been advised, go on with their lives, their friends and activities, rarely intersecting with the 'life up on the hill.' It is hard to believe that a town as small as this one can really be two towns, where two very distinct ways of life coexist.[29]

7.2.2 The Press

Another Sackville institution, the weekly Sackville Tribune-Post, has a virtual monopoly on the formation of public opinion on town matters. In the Civic Centre project coverage, the paper did not take a balanced approach. My conversations with local planner and personal friend Denise, revealed just how much public opinion was shaped and determined by the ideas and tone of the local press. A planner dedicated to improving the quality of the local environment, Denise would be, in my opinion, not easily convinced by the press that a multi-use, accessible community centre wasn't a great opportunity for Sackville. Denise admitted to me that since she arrived in Sackville a year ago, she relied to a certain degree on articles in The Sackville Tribune-Post to learn about the issues and problems in town. In her opinion, the Civic Centre project appeared to be somewhat dubious and rather controversial based on what "people had to say about it" (Melanson, May 21, 2000). She assumed that if people cannot agree on the relative benefits and costs of this facility, there was something wrong with the project. I was able to understand Denise's position because I was also not immune to misinformation, and accepted in at least one instance, for a short while, the paper's comments at face value.

Even after spending several years in the town, reading the paper carefully and being involved in the town's life, on one occasion I misjudged planners' efforts to curb local eagerness to expand a Sackville business facility in an ecologically sensitive area. I read a Tribune-Post article (Scott-Wallace, June 14, 2000:7) about the Town's decision to allow the expansion of a trucking company at the edge of the Waterfowl Park and was troubled by the local planners' apparent inaction in preventing the development. As I had some doubts about the portrayal of the facts in the paper, I decided to talk to Denise in person. Through speaking with her I found out that the local Planning Commission did much more than the paper was revealing. While the planners did not have enough power to overturn Council's decision, they were able to take several pro-active regulatory steps which required this trucking business to comply with strict environmental monitoring guidelines and to landscape their territory in order to create a buffer zone between the

business area, the highway and the town. As Denise stressed, the guidelines will set a precedent for other developments in town (Melanson, June 16, 2000). Sadly, I did not learn this from the press and I am one of the very few individuals who had a chance to form a fuller picture of the local event.

The Sackville Tribune-Post certainly tended to embellish when covering some events in town, no doubt to turn them into more interesting stories and serve to attract a wider readership. Yet, I think that the paper's position on the Civic Centre went beyond a search for juicy details and insider information. The local newspaper adopted a stand against a multi-purpose facility, supporting fiscal conservatism and a traditional approach to the provision of public amenities. It exploited internal conflicts and growing pains of the project in creating a particular image of it. Certain more vocal Councillors, as well as community members representing businesses and church groups (which contribute to the paper through their advertisements) had their particular motivations for opposing the multi-purpose centre, and were likely to influence the paper's tone and position on many events relating to the project. This would not have been such a problem if there had been other forums that might have countered, or at least critiqued, the newspaper's stand. But there were no comparable oppositional voices. As a result, an important function of the participatory design process: the individual and communal learning through increased awareness of a problem, was not facilitated by the main media outlet in town.

7.2.3 Regional and municipal governments

Regional political processes have always had a significant impact on the daily lives of people in Sackville. The political shift from a Liberal to a Conservative provincial administration in the Summer of 1999 permeated the daily life of the town, altering plans for its future development and maintenance of existing services. Historically, a significant part of the capital and operational budgets of small towns in New Brunswick came from the provincial and federal budgets and were administered through unconditional grants and other programs. The remainder, not covered by

provincial or federal funding, had to be payed by local taxpayers. Considering the relatively weak industrial and other private business base in the region, usually the majority of revenue increases had to be sought through residential taxes and user fees. Direct federal and provincial investment in municipalities had a profound impact on the social stability and fiscal well-being of many Maritime communities. Therefore it often helped to have the local MP or MLA belong to a ruling party.

A hands-off approach typified provincial politicians' most recent direction toward local communal initiatives and economic and social development in general. Since 1992, many municipalities in the area have had to perform quite a juggling act to fill the void left by constantly decreasing unconditional grants from the province. In eight years, Sackville has seen a 43.9 per cent cut which resulted in a loss of $506,080. According to official predictions, there is more 'hacking' to come in the future. The Mayor of Sackville and the Mayor of the neighbouring Village of Dorchester agreed that tourism activity will suffer as a result of these drastic cuts and the good will of volunteers and town boosters cannot realistically replace good roads and well maintained basic amenities such as local banks and gas stations (Tower, May 10, 2000:3).

The Conservative government's new program of action suggested that it was disengaging from providing financial assistance while it advocated the idea of promoting towns through their own municipalities and volunteers. "Simply research and consultation with tourism and industry leaders" was the type of help communities such as Sackville were receiving from the province (Dobson, August 23, 2000:1). At the same time the provincial budget announced by the new Conservative Cabinet in early 2000 indicated dramatic cuts in public funding in many areas, and especially in tourism and economic development.[30] As one of the provincial politicians suggested in his presentation to Sackville volunteer group representatives, the town "has gone back to basics, to a concept that has been missing for some time in many communities - people helping people and the idea that if you want it done right, you have to do it yourself" (Caron, December 8, 1999).

The environment of stiff competition for declining government grants influenced

decisions and working methods of the Civic Centre design team. First, the provincial election and change of ruling party in 1999 rendered all earlier financial lobbying and political negotiations fruitless. The networking and the presentations of the project to the 'right' people had to start all over. In addition, the new Conservative Cabinet started its reforms by cutting public investment in many areas of the budget. In the context of dramatic cuts to the basic town maintenance budget, not many had a strong confidence they would see generous public donations for the new public amenity. At this crucial point of political pressure from the province, the local Council and provincial Cabinet members agreed to 'curb' local appetites for a public facility. Through realizing this process they were able to justify lower provincial investment in the Sackville community.

The most significant characteristic of Town Council's involvement in the Civic Centre was that it did not exercise the necessary solidarity and commitment in seeing the project through to its realization. Council's agendas changed depending on internal and external fluctuations in power and political fortune. Its effectiveness in legislative decision making and lobbying was in part constrained by the fact that Councillors are essentially civic volunteers paid a very modest sum for this part time work, and are dependant on other income, in other words employers, investors, or clients, for their living. Their decisions on controversial issues are scrutinized by their friends and colleagues in town. My observations led me to believe that Council was not only not pro-active, progressive or visionary, but did not adequately fight for the needs and interests of local residents. Rather, they emphasized the importance of establishing affiliations with local and regional political and administrative forces. Council's decision to take the step of revising the goals of the Civic Centre project after internal communications with provincial officials indicates the influence resulting from such an alliance. When budget cuts to the project were imminent, Council did not go back to the community to acquire a more formal response as to how to deal with the cuts or solicit possible project alternatives. Conducting a second phone survey or circulating new written questionnaires were not part of their problem solving strategy or formal approach to dealing with a fundamental change to the publicly funded project.

7.2.4 The architect

During my work on the case study I spent many days wondering how I was going to write a thesis about the designer's role in this community-based project if the architect himself was not involved in many important aspects of the initiative. As the project progressed, my opinion was strengthened that important design decisions were made all the way along, even if they were carried out by non-designers. The architect's absence can be as telling as his actions if we analyse the design practice from the perspective concerned with design as a social process rather than a narrow professional domain.

Andrew made a substantial initial effort to positively transform the environmental and social balance in the community through the design of the Civic Centre. However, his effort became less and less effective as the project developed. While participating in the work of the Civic Centre Board and maintaining regular conversations with Andrew, I was continuously reflecting on his performance as a professional architect and one of the leaders of the community-based public project. The architect's comprehensive vision of the project, which was based on careful consideration of the design requirements suggested by the Board and formalized through a socially and environmentally integrated and rather attractive public facility, won him the project contract. However, just several months after being hired, he was spending most of his time and energy defending the vision of the multi-purpose centre to the divided Town Council. He did continue to work in fits and starts, but was often waiting for the client to give directions as to when and how the design stage should be completed. Finally he had to compromise his own vision for the facility and redesign the Centre into a rink. In retrospect the architect's actions during the design stage of the project were often more reactive than proactive. Andrew's status was established in part through his own actions, but also by circumstances and context. He had reduced chances of claiming a leadership position among other project organizers primarily because he was not recognized as an equal participant and a figure of social influence in the community.

When immersed in the project I found that, despite changing fortunes and political

realities, Andrew managed to at least partially shape the design and influence the form and content of the Civic Centre through skilful negotiation. Nevertheless, his influence under the given circumstances was limited to application of specialized professional skills such as development of the overall facility plan and working drawings, addressing technical issues regarding construction of the building and circulatory systems within the arena, and determining cost estimates for the project.

As later events proved, one of the architect's direct responsibilities was not properly fulfilled. An oversight was made on the project's budget. By February of 2001 the initial price of $3.4 million for the construction of the arena was raised by a whooping $1 million dollars. The architect had revised his earlier estimates after negotiating with specific contractors and making adjustments to the overall capital charges for the project. Despite clear instructions given by the project organizers not to exceed the set price for the development, and the architect's promises to accommodate this particular requirement, the cost of the rink rose to the previously estimated and rejected budget for the Civic Centre. The community had no choice but to deal with the situation. Though the architect was not legally responsible, his professional ethics were questioned. Andrew did not foresee fluctuating material and labour prices in the local market and did not incorporate or warn the project organizers about possible budgetary changes. This problem can also be attributed to the ongoing discrepancy between the inflexible governmental funding structure for public projects and the working methods of market regulated architectural practices, contractors, and supply and demand dependent services and material prices. Effective and socially responsible participation, however, requires more than a business or professional skill (Wasserman, Sullivan and Palermo, 2000:3). Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Tridib Banerjee (1998:167) submit that in order for urban design to mediate in complex and often polarized socio-physical environments, designers must understand the political economy of the current economic globalized order which produced these environments. It would be too simplistic to assume that in the case of the Sackville project, the understanding of the social forces at play alone would have informed the architect as to how to proceed with the project. Andrew, according to my

observations and conversations with him, comprehended the issues relating to the project, its funding and local attitudes toward the new development. He had not only graduated from Mount Allison University and designed several projects in the town, but also worked among colleagues who knew Sackville very well. If his local connections, his firm's experience, and offering of lowest price for the architectural services and overall building cost won him the contract, Andrew's good intentions and knowledge of issues did not change his standing on the power map of Sackville and within the Civic Centre design group. The underlying political and financial decisions, rather than the architect's and community's visions of the Civic Centre, had affected the shape, location, size and content of the design (see Figure 4).

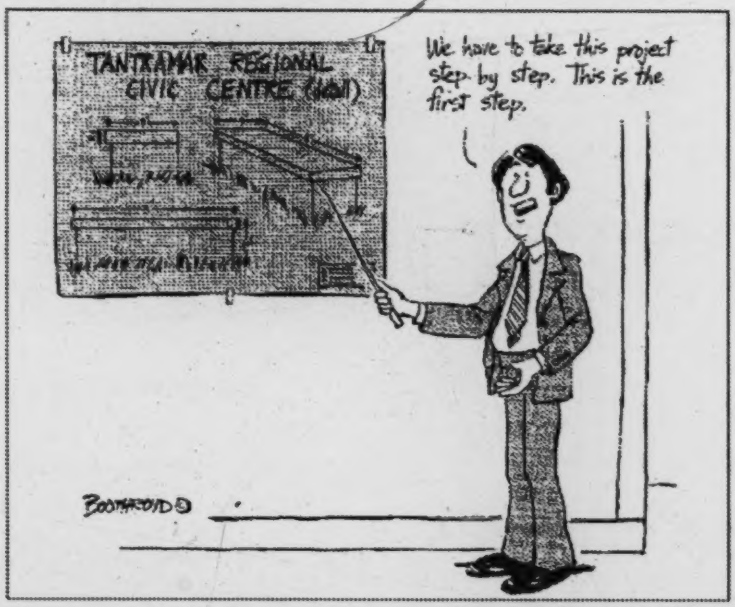

Figure 4 Boothroyd. Editorial Cartoon. The Sackville Tribune-Post. March 1, 2000:4.

Further, the architect's actions were structurally tied to his position of hired professional who tendered his services for a fee. The Board, which initially collaborated with Andrew on the planning of the Civic Centre, became powerless in the face of

pressure to downsize the project. The architect was obliged to continue working on a changed concept and adjust to new leadership within the Board. The result of this transition was the design of a typical sports arena, a comfortable and efficient building which has very little relation to its immediate surroundings - social and physical - "a space to enter and leave - to fill and empty - rather than a place to relate to" (Bale, 1996:97). Ideally, according to Jos Boys (1996: 224), architects should strive to make "a commitment in theory and practice to involvement in the economic and social beyond representation" (see also Rose 1993). The architect in this case responded to and represented the social, economic and political contexts by designing a rink, but could not venture beyond to offer any substantive developmental alternatives.

These alternatives could have included reducing building costs for the rink section, allowing for the design of spaces and places for an extended range of public activities and opportunities for public interaction. He might also have proposed creation of a public environment that would be accessible, convenient and appealing for use by a broad spectrum of town residents including women, teenagers, seniors and persons with disabilities. This potential contribution to the town would not of course change economic realities of the day, but to those who are most greatly affected by the associated hardships it would have made life more socially rewarding. The community could have also garnered strength through the new means of communal contact. Perhaps through these new opportunities for social interaction between students, teenagers, other town residents and town visitors, the town could face the future with more confidence and internal coherence.

Environmentally and aesthetically the scaled-down version of the project was inferior to the architect's initial proposal. The lack of landscaping created a void in the continuous fabric of the town, making the Civic Centre appear more as an object serving a specialized function in the town than a public place to visit and spend time in.

The position of the architect and his arguments might have been considered more carefully if local planners had been involved throughout the project's development. They could have assisted in communications with the public on the issues that arose during the

process of the Civic Centre design. Unfortunately, the Tantramar Planning Commission, directly responsible for planning related issues in Sackville and the surrounding area, did not play a significant role in this process.

The passivity of local planners was not incidental. Historically, stimulation of growth has been more important than growth management in Atlantic Canada. The primary role of planners, the normative intervention which considers "the physical planning in order to minimize public and social costs while enhancing livability", has been diminished in order not to scare off potential investment or development (Heseltine, 1998:16, 22). Specialized services to small towns such as zoning control, solid waste management and building inspections, have become the main responsibilities of these Planning Districts.[31] According to Heseltine (1998: 22), local planning commissions in the Maritimes did not have grass roots support because serving local interests of economic development was not their primary mandate. Their charge to conduct balanced, environmentally and socially responsible planning often did not harmonize with local business and government priorities. The planners did not become part of this major community project for many reasons. One reason was a lack of power in the decision making process. Further, the Commission was subordinate to the local municipality which did not recognize the potential of planners' help. Finally, there was the unwillingness of planners themselves to stir controversies within the small community.

7.3 Project evaluation

My analysis of the Civic Centre project from the position concerned with the quality of the design process and its catalytic impact on the community suggests that the initiative did not reach its goals. The unbalanced relations of power have produced an unbalanced project. The participatory undertaking, which was initially intended to provide a multi-purpose public facility, accessible to all community members, and integrated into the fabric of the town through careful site design, has 'evolved' into a rink. However, the new rink in Sackville was needed and desired by its residents for many

years. And the rink is being built. What has happened in between?

7.3.1 The politics of public funding

The easiest answer to the 'what happened' question would be that a scarcity of public funding gradually forced the community to realize that this project was too expensive to bear. According to the popular opinion in town, the rink was a better alternative to nothing at all. This attitude explains why the project organizers and town leaders' lack of determination to preserve all of the components in the proposed facility was criticized in public very little, but it does not reveal complex socio-economic reasons behind the downsizing of the project. Considering my own experiences and the data available, I suggest that while insufficient funds had a significant influence on the development of the project, it was not the only and not the decisive factor in the outcome of the project. The underlining problem in this case was that the democratic process of planning wasn't properly followed. Apart from deeply ingrained socio-cultural conditions which influenced the general tone of opinions and their interpretations, there were strategic factors which had significant bearing on planning and administration of the project.

I wish to consider more closely the timing and administration of public funding for projects such as the Sackville Civic Centre. Governmental funding practices determine how the design process in the Sackville case and similar projects is structured. From the outset of the designing of the Civic Centre, organizers predicted that, based on examples of comparable existing projects in the region, most of the funding (at least two-thirds of the overall cost) could be obtained from public sources. Hopes for receiving significant corporate or other private sponsorship did not appear to be realistic. As a result, local efforts were concentrated on identifying and seeking funding though public channels, and complying with the rules of public funding competitions.

In the competition for public funding, elected governments, while constantly concerned with their popularity on one hand and balancing budgets on the other, hold

power over the distribution of taxpayers' money. Thus, the cycles of public investment in projects such as the Civic Centre depend on the election cycles. Problems await groups of citizens, organizations or communities who happen to develop time consuming and complex projects without due regard to the terms of office of governing parties or their representatives, be they provincial or federal. If a project is underway during the time when a party in power loses an election, the new government is not necessarily obliged to follow up with or continue the program or project. Such volatility and susceptibility to political manipulation is especially noticeable in regions with smaller populations and weaker economic bases. The problems of these communities do not always make it to the national press or other national media, and therefore do not incite wider scale outrage and public debate.[32] I would argue that greater political sophistication and improved mechanisms of public advocacy would prevent much miscommunication and patronage, or at least confusion on the part of less experienced or powerful communities like Sackville.

At the very beginning of the Sackville project the provincial Liberal government, in power at that time, offered its support in principle, and therefore encouraged the community to develop the Civic Centre vision into an actual project in order to encourage future investment. As later events proved, the Province's support was politically motivated, and no money was at that time allocated for the project. The architect, the Board of Directors and the community were putting their time and creative energy into something that was not guaranteed at all. 'Serious' competition for funds started much later in the process, when the design stage of the project was completed and the divisions within the community about the project had become more pronounced. Understandably, significant opposition to the project came from citizens who were becoming wary of the funding uncertainty and were afraid that the burden of paying for the facility would eventually fall on the community's shoulders. During this critical period (between the fall of 1999 and winter of 2000) the University started considering closing down its ailing rink. The Town Council was facing the dilemma of either cutting its expectations dramatically and increasing its chances of receiving smaller governmental contributions,

or possibly ending up building nothing.

7.3.2 Shortcomings in the public input process

The political and design inexperience of the volunteer Board, the lack of professional planning and political support in navigating public participation, and power struggles within Town Council, had the most marked impact on the failure of the public input process. The participatory and inclusive nature of the Sackville Civic Centre project started fragmenting during the conceptual design phase. Despite the energy of local volunteers who started this project with considerable enthusiasm, public input and communication was not coordinated effectively. Councillors, the Board and other volunteers did not present an organized and open approach in addressing the initial stages of project development. The only short round of public meetings at which the design concept was discussed took place at the beginning of 1999, after the conceptual planning for the Civic Centre was completed. This meant that a relatively comprehensive evaluation of the community's opinions took place only once during the design period, and rather late. The main goal of the consultations and meetings, was to gauge the levels of support for the project and, particularly, the willingness of the local property owners to bear additional taxes.

As later events proved, the public review of the design proposal and alternative ideas that resulted (i.e: the rink-only option, and different sites for the facility) did not receive serious consideration. Since the review of the existing facilities in the region, Civic Centre Board members had pursued a single vision of the future design. The idea of a multi-purpose facility had been quickly planted in the minds and plans of the Board and Council at the beginning of the project. The public questionnaire was written in such a way as to suggest that a multi-purpose facility was a desired outcome and was feasible. While there was a question asking for suggestions for "any improvements/alternatives to our proposed plan" (see Appendix 1), there were no other consultations held with town residents about possible alternatives. The multi-purpose centre design concept was

presented for scrutiny to the public and provincial and federal government representatives. Of course, the Board was expecting certain amendments to result from public consultations, but a more substantial discussion of the project was not anticipated or planned for.

During the two year period between December of 1998 and January of 2001, following the generation of the conceptual plan and initial public presentations, only one public meeting was held with residents living in the neighbourhood of the future site. This was in April of 1999. Several serious concerns and ideas were presented to the Board and the Council. While they considered some of the suggestions from these town residents, and did subsequently publish regular updates on the project in the local paper, the Board did not engage in a continuing direct dialogue with the town residents. This kind of face to face discussion or consultation would have been meaningful and valuable to local people. Most importantly, options for public input and open, community wide discussion were not considered when serious internal and external conflicts were permeating the initiative and it was being downgraded to the construction of an ice rink. It is possible that as the Civic Centre project became more and more tangible to Sackville residents, a flow of continuous and detailed information and two-way communication would have created increased acceptance and encouraged constructive visions of the future development. The root of the problem in this respect was not that the majority of local people did not support the multi-purpose facility in principle, but that the Board ran with a single vision, not offering opportunities for substantial consideration of alternatives, including the possibility of a rink-only centre.

The public outreach, which took place mainly through the local newspaper, was also problematic. The regular columns written by the Civic Centre Board and staff described the project in very general terms. They did not reveal many significant problems in, or details of, design process. Several community members I had a chance to talk to interpreted the information regarding the project as superficial. According to them, there was something going on with the design of the Civic Centre, but the regular citizens in town weren't 'in the know' about it. The gaps in public knowledge ended up being

'filled in' by letters to the editor arguing against the new development.

Lack of local leadership was another stumbling block in the course of the project. Mayor Jim Long, elected in 1999 by acclamation to the civic post during the development of the Civic Centre, was rather ambivalent about the multi-use facility. He didn't try to hide his position from the press, nor from his colleagues. As the political practice of going with the flow is common in this town, the Mayor's indecisiveness did not seem surprising to many residents. He openly stated to a reporter of a Fredericton paper in September of 1999 that his decisions will follow the political will of the Council, public opinion and the funding situation. (Poitras, September 22, 1999:1) The fact that the majority of Sackville residents had endorsed the multi-use Civic Centre project in the questionnaire survey, and that this support was substantiated through the telephone survey in January of 1999, did not have a significant impact on the Mayor's interpretations of the public's will, his decisions and actions. Mayor Long and the Council members, in positions of relative power, made their own judgements about the situation and projected their accounts on the community through skilful manipulation. Most importantly, the Council's 'truth' about the project was not generated as a result of democratic consensus. Rather it sustained power relations within the community and validated a convergence of motives and interests of several power groups.

7.3.3 Lack of professional support

Another reason behind the shortcomings in the Civic Centre planning was that the community of Sackville did not have timely and effective professional support. One of the key players in this design initiative, the architect, was introduced to the project when most of the conceptual planning had ended, and at the point when tensions within the community regarding the project were surfacing. According to Barry Wasserman, Patrick Sullivan and Gregory Palermo (2000:81), architects can shape our built environments as "participating agents". They bring "to bear their specialized knowledge and skills of history, technology, construction and aesthetics. However, rarely are they participants in

the critical stage when, individually or collectively, persons or communities decide to intervene and change their world, whether it is to build a church, a school, a new home, a new factory, or a new laboratory" and this proved to be the case with this project (Wasserman, Sullivan and Palermo, 2000:81).

An architect has to offer something special, something that goes beyond knowledge of formal and technical matters of building design. That particular talent and experiential knowledge can only be disseminated and critically evaluated if the architect, entering a contract with a community group and other organizations, is recognized as an engaged and informed participant in the planning process. In everyday practice, however, the client's initial concept, the budget, and the project site are often already in place when the architect steps in. I submit that the architect should be involved in design programming in the initial stages of the project in order to be able to contribute to a solid foundation for participatory planning and to have significant input as the design is developed. Such early involvement, according to Francis (quoted in Sanoff, 2000:27), ideally "begins well before there is a paying client and continues long after the contract ends."[33] In the early stages the architect should contribute conceptual ideas, project programming, and design alternatives for the site and building.

The architect in the Sackville case would have influenced the project more profoundly if he had had an opportunity to establish closer ties with the potential users of Civic Centre before the design propositions were generated. A closer examination of the existing socio-cultural situation in the community would likely have aided him in developing a more reflective and inclusive work strategy, and in considering and proposing, with more authority, possible alternative development options for the centre. As the design stage of the project was stretched into its third year, the architect was charged with 'solving' problems that should have been addressed collaboratively earlier in the process. He spent a lot of energy revising plans for the facility to meet changing economic and political demands. Andrew was at this point certainly addressing more the immediate concerns of his paying client - the Town Council and the Board, and less the actual users of the facility - the town residents.

In addition to the absence of the architect, the planners did not step in, or, to be more precise, weren't invited by Council to take a more active role in the project. The work mandate of the local Planning Commission (primarily zoning control, solid waste management, provision of building permits and conduct of building inspections) unfortunately did not make it mandatory to take part in this major community project. Part of the responsibility for not seeking planners' help also rests on the shoulders of the Civic Centre Board. Board members sincerely believed that a well developed and researched plan shouldn't need 'extra padding' from other professionals. It would speak for itself and become accepted and supported almost automatically because of its inherent qualities. Flyvbjerg's (1998) critical evaluation of the urban redevelopment project in the Danish town of Aalborg emphasizes a common design planning problem which painfully resembles what happened in the town of Sackville. "[S]omebody has forgotten to communicate exactly what will happen on the day the revolution begins. What is lacking is a realist's sense of the practical, a realist's experience that power, effective communication, and day-by-day monitoring have to be used to sustain ideals, norms, plans, and rationalities when these proceed from the drawing board to reality" (Flyvbjerg, 1998:123).

The weight of traditions and the embeddedness of local power structures turned the search for solutions to the project's problems into a challenging endeavour. I don't expect that analysis of these problems and consideration of potential changes in formal institutions and their respective political practices will effect immediate transformation in the way projects such as the Civic Centre are perceived and implemented. My hope is that certain political and social practices could be revised and changes implemented through the community's directed attempts at reform. These attempts should be build on solid public knowledge of existing problems and the exposing of social power networks that define the character of public developments.

8.0 CONCLUSION: From the Sackville experience toward a more effective and socially responsive design practice

As this study illustrates, in large scale design projects political forces condition the totality of the process. Such an idea is hardly new, but it gains a renewed potency when revealed within a design narrative which addresses the conditions and causes of design decisions and explains the designer's actions in the context of a multitude of power relations. One of the problems identified in this work is that the professional designer is normally called to engage in her or his professional activity when the most important design decisions have already been made. I argue that the catalytic role the designer as a creative, informed and skilful individual can be strengthened through getting involved from the time the problem is being identified, and through building a dynamic equilibrium between individual competency and the ability to generate collective design decisions among design participants. In order to create conditions for the maintenance of such a balance there is a need to further articulate the notion of design as a social practice and to enrich design's operational tools in order to link the traditional strengths of the designer's professional skills with an acute political and social knowledge and sensitivity.

In a society with strong democratic ideals but a weak system for realization of these ideals, special attention should be directed toward the mechanisms of design implementation and the ways they influence the ongoing use and perception of designed phenomena. If we accept that design is a communicative process connecting various power groups, institutions, users, designers and policy developers, the quality of this process depends on the quality of communication taking place between these groups, individuals and institutions. The social impact of design and its outcomes can be evaluated by analysing the relative impact of every participant or group involved.

If one or another party disproportionally influences the design project, it disturbs the balance in the participatory decision making process. It also distorts the sense of democratic group ownership of the design as a product and as a process. In the Sackville

case, control over the project slid into the hands of regional government bureaucrats who were potential fund providers, and into the hands of local politicians who bore the financial responsibility for the project.

Unfortunately, town leaders and their supporters in the higher echelons of power did not see the full potential of the Civic Centre, and in particular its role in allowing the community to express and redefine itself through use of the new facility. Local and regional leaders did not cultivate the community's potential for change, and further, they did not recognize the various developmental opportunities the Centre represented including attracting fairs, conferences, cultural festivals and other regional events. Sackville residents, and especially those who usually remain outside of public debates and opinion polls, had lost the chance to fully benefit from the public development.

The combined efforts of various community groups, potential users of the facility, the Civic Centre Board, and the architect, affected the outcome of the project only partially. The ethical principles of inclusive participatory design were not realized in the Sackville project because direct links weren't established between the project and the key users of the future facility: the residents of the town. The social responsibility was placed on residents' shoulders, but the power of decision making remained mostly in the hands of regional and local politicians. The mediation and leadership of the architect and the Board was critical to the project's success. They did not, however, rise to the challenge of effectively representing and defending the interests of Sackville residents, especially those who did not have the courage and determination to write letters to the local paper or lobby their Councillors directly.

Projects such as the Tantramar Regional Civic Centre are as likely to fail as to succeed, considering the many serious obstacles to their realization. Even with superior planning and community experts' help, the Sackville project was not likely to reach the 'ideal speech situation' (see Habermas, 1987) where individuals and groups would have been able to express themselves freely regardless of their social status and power base within the community. Greater transparency and accountability in design initiatives can, nevertheless, generate awareness of power structures at work and force all of the

participants (including those who prefer to work behind closed doors) to reveal the nature of their contribution to the project and the character of their relations with other involved parties. As the Sackville case revealed, the local newspaper, in its coverage of the project, did not demonstrate a serious commitment to balanced representation of diverse opinions within the community about the development. However, the problem of the lack of transparency went deeper than the inability of the local media to expose the project and communicate its problems. The design model adopted in the Civic Centre project should have acknowledged the political aspects of the design action and included strategies and tools through which project organizers could maintain continuous and direct contact with the users. Extending beyond closed meetings between the Board, Council and the architect, such a process would have to include a possibly more time consuming and complicated but direct collaboration with potential users of the facility. In order to work collectively and arrive at mutually acceptable results, a more transparent and direct design process - one in which design initiators, participants and organizers were enabled and had fair representation - was required. Careful, informed and open conduct of the design process can increase the likelihood of successful implementation and, even more importantly, educate the public about the intricacies of community based development and guide them towards alternatives for future transformations.

In order to respond to the challenge of conceptualizing socially responsible and responsive design practice, it is necessary to reexamine the relationships between designer and designed objects, messages and environments. Among key directions adopted in my work were seeking a better understanding of the relationships between the social environment and the built environment, and addressing the relevance of these complex relationships to design practice.

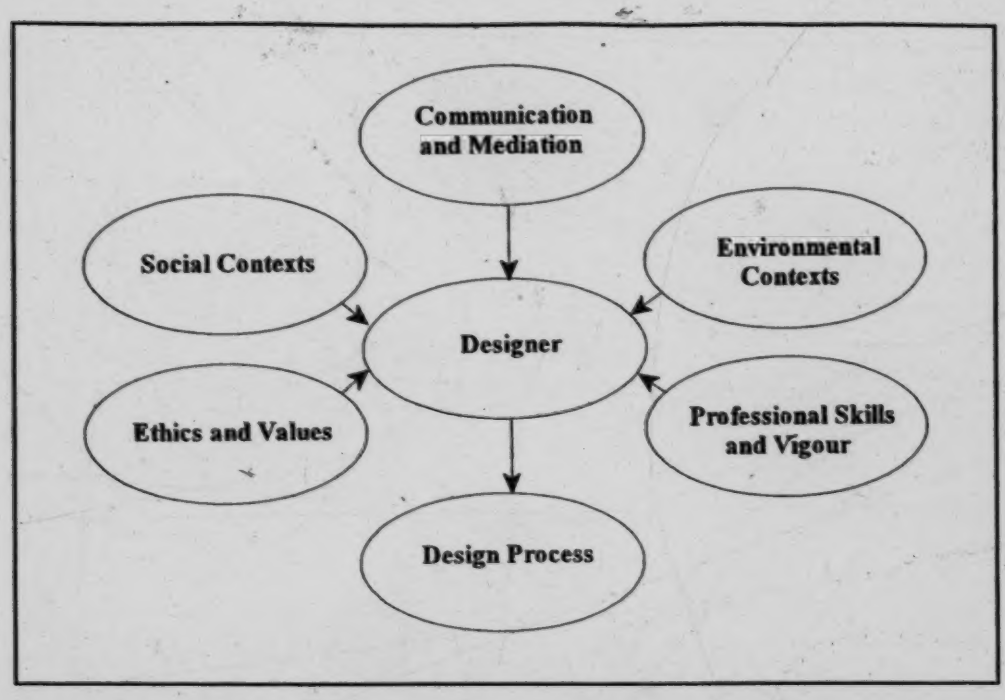

Figure 5 The designer's responsibility is to mediate the communication process geared toward design implementation. In order to meet this challenge, he or she has to integrate professional skills, and understanding of social and physical contexts of design, and be able to mediate values and beliefs of various groups and individuals involved in or impacted by design projects.

My dissertation research started with an assumption that the designer's responsibility can be conceptualized through a 'tree' diagram (See Figure 5). The designer through his or her practice relates various branches of the social and physical context and channels them into the design process. The number and the strength of the branches serve as indicators of the level of social awareness and vigour. The concept implies that it is the designer's responsibility to relate to the other participants involved, mediate the collaboration, and convey the collaborative input into the design. The Sackville case revealed that the individual contribution of the architect - an architecturally sound design proposal - was not enough to ensure the success of the initiative. I argue that the necessary components for a good result were present at the outset of the project: the

architect's talent and professional knowledge, the public's excitement about and general support for the development, and the willingness of the Board to lobby hard and mediate the design process. However, the participants in this project did not sustain a productive collaborative design process. As a result, the collective ability to materialize ideas in this public development, and the potential for the architect to serve as a catalyst, were dramatically diminished.

My review and analysis of interdisciplinary design research, findings of the case study, and reflections on the architect's role in the project in particular, compelled me to expand my initial notion of the designer's social obligations. While the concept represented in the tree diagram is correct, it nevertheless has serious limitations. It presents the individual designer, in this case the architect, as aspiring to relate to, but actually distinct from, his socio-cultural context and the dynamic power relations permeating every stage of the design process. It could also lead to the false assumption that the ability to generate socially responsible choices lies in the individual's adeptness in developing superior knowledge of various fields of human existence, in internalizing contextual aspects of design, and in translating them into design solutions.

It would be disheartening to accept that virtue in socially responsible designing lies only in the hands of superior individuals. Such an assumption affords little hope to designers who are enmeshed in everyday practices and have to battle, negotiate and compromise throughout their careers. More often than not, designers, architects and planners find themselves part of complex social networks and relationships, and able to effect design only in the context of these relationships. The practices of architects, for example, include interaction with clients, building users, contractors, material suppliers and consultants. Some of these relationships are formalized through contracts or governmental regulations, and some are shaped by more informal agreements and practices. Careful revision of these relationships is important in order to dissect the process of design and learn from successes and failures. For example, the Civic Centre initiative had participants whose relationship with the design project was not properly formalized, but who played an important role, shaping the project by exercising control

over public funds. The federal and provincial governments made critical decisions about the timing of funding and the actual amount of money committed for the development. Indications by the funding bodies that money will be committed only for the rink part of the project was a fundamental constraint which influenced design decisions and changed the whole direction of the project. However, throughout the Civic Centre undertaking there was no one particular person or group that was actually responsible for representing governments and communicating clearly their positions to project organizers.

If we agree that design should be a participatory process, the tools used to evaluate

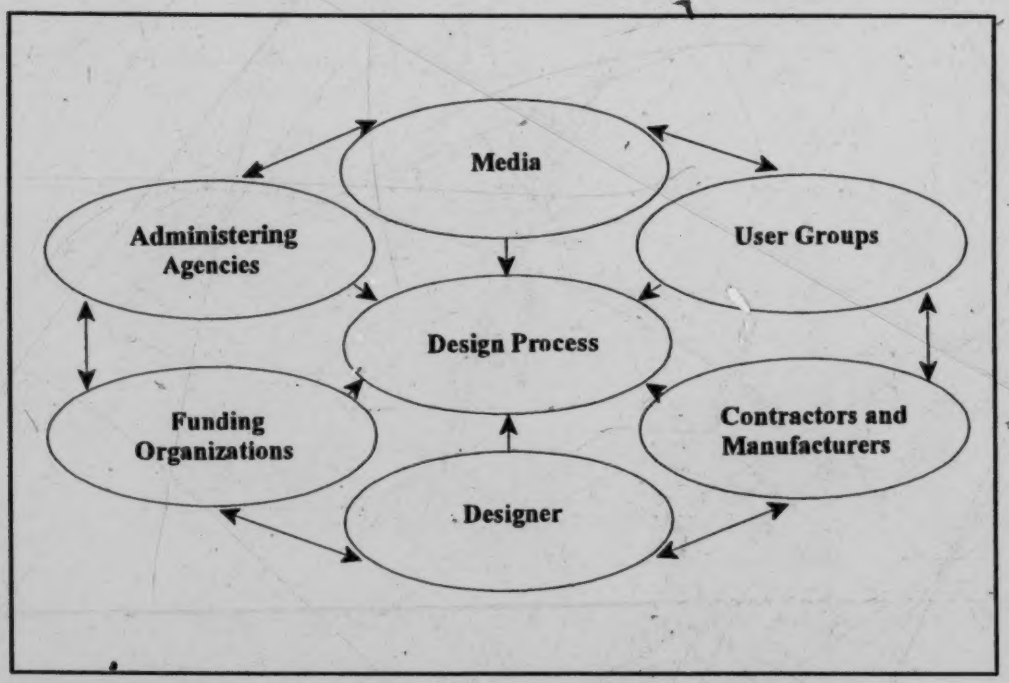

Figure 6 The relationship between the designer and the design process should be considered as an integral part of social action aimed at transforming environments, objects or information. To achieve a successful transformation, effective and democratic communication should take place between contributing participants. In each design instance, particular roles and responsibilities of each party involved will vary. However, the participants should also embrace a collective collaborative responsibility to act ethically and maintain channels of communication and exchange of ideas.

design practice should support and acknowledge this fact. In addressing the limitations in my first assumption, I propose to conceptualize the designer's responsibility as an integral element of the communal participation and relations with other groups and forces involved in the design (see Figure 6). Rather than concentrating on the acting individual, I focus on a specific design intervention which is influenced by many contributing factors. Most often design projects are inspired, generated, and developed by several participants, whether they are involved directly or indirectly. In this sharing process the designer's responsibility is to bring design tools and conceptual paradigms into the collaboration, and to take part in (and in many cases lead) the development of a participatory and inclusive creative process that integrates the opinions, working frameworks and goals of other parties involved. Designs are realized through continuous dialogue between different systems of meaning, different conceptualizations of socio-spatial relations and varying approaches to designing and implementing transformations.

I believe that a redefined and integrated vision of the participatory design process does not reduce the designer's need to act responsibly. It rather integrates the designer with his or her share of responsibilities into the network of participants. While ethical decisions are made by all participants involved, they gather and merge in the collaboration. It is still the central ethical concern of the designer, as it should be for other parties, to master the design process. This leads to further questions, including: "How are design processes carried out? Who is involved, and how are decisions made?" (Wasserman, Sullivan and Palermo, 2000:16) While professional designers should not be expected to be super-heroes, their work mandate calls for significant contributions to their societies. Profound understanding of one's limitations, and development of the skills and knowledge to overcome some of these limitations, can unleash creative energy and open opportunities for socially situated, but substantial design contributions. Analysing the involvement of the architect in the Civic Centre project, it can be suggested that understanding the context and limitations of participatory design and power relations forming during the design process should have not precluded Andrew from taking a position of leadership in representing more rigorously those for whom this public amenity

was intended - the broad range of Sackville residents. Building direct ties with the facility users would have not only increased the likelihood of more responsive and responsible design conduct, it would have increased the community's bargaining power for limited public funds.

In instances of everyday practice, design contributors and their relative influence vary, but more importantly, the weight of social conditions is always present. In some design instances, however, the effects of social conditions are more immediate or evident than in others. In order to reveal the social significance of the design process one has to proceed with a careful analysis of the cumulative effects of actions taken and the ethical positions of the design participants and those affected by the design transformations.

In the case of the Sackville Civic Centre project, the political structure of public funds allocation had an enormous effect on the project, but it was concealed by government officials through various bureaucratic manoeuvres. When the rink was ready to be built, stability of power relations was retained at the expense of democratic and open collaboration. According to Bent Flyvbjerg (1998:141), "'stable' power relations should not be confused with 'balanced' power relations." As the project developed, a significant degree of power was exercised by regional and local government officials in order to transform the initiative. The direct influence exercised by various participants was disproportionate. Many individuals and groups who are not considered to be formal participants in a design project often don't get an opportunity to shape it in any significant way. Sackville residents didn't get a proper chance to assess and react to the flow of the project, even though their lives were greatly influenced by this development (e.g. financially through taxes, or through changes to the character of the neighbourhood).

In order to make meaningful and effective contributions to society, and be at the forefront of the practice that creates objects, environments and messages responsive to the increasing complexity and rapid pace of change in today's society, designers should confront the epistemological task of redefining design action paradigms. In part this could be achieved by testing relevant analytical approaches used in other disciplines concerned with creative problem solving and generation of innovative responses through more

effective collaboration and communication; and by continuously re-evaluating design methods in response to changing social settings and varying value systems within which it operates.

Among concerns of the designer, "the relations between knowledge and power are decisive if one seeks to understand the kinds of processes affecting the dynamics of politics, administration, and planning" (Flyvbjerg, 1998:226). The professional knowledge of the designer is a complex source of power and should not be underestimated. Whether and how a designer is able to transform his or her own contextual knowledge into actions will determine the extent and nature of the social impact of the design. One place to start is to learn from examples of collaborative design at every developmental stage: from concept formation, to realization, to maintenance of the design. Discussion of models of design implementation should include an articulation of how conceptual frameworks and ideas are realized in action. In addition, these models will help designers and citizens understand and assess the ethical and political consequences of various possibilities for action, or design interventions. Particular design cases have much explanatory power, allowing them to serve as valuable material for reflection.

Dynamic analysis of design as a collaborative practice can aid in evaluating the overall integrity of the design process as well as the specific roles of the key players involved in, or affected by, the process. Special attention should be paid to the changing composition of the design group during the span of this process, and to the power relations developing between parties. "[T]he actors in the process need to be articulated within their various positionalities, and the architecture and city development then studied in its particular context as a mechanism of translation. While such study will necessarily be more complex, it may also enable a richer and denser level of analysis" (Boys, 1998:216). The extent of control over various factors in the design process, the ability to effect the design directly, and the nature of relationships among project participants, would be the main elements to be addressed in this type of analysis. One way to achieve this is to incorporate an extended notion of the designer's participation in design as a

social process rather than, as in the Sackville case, to view the designer as a provider of a specific and limited professional service, somewhat outside of problems and transitions taking place during the development. This kind of analysis can provide leads to the tools and methods appropriate for a design action that acknowledges and incorporates a diversity of opinions.

Design research and broader reflection on the social consequences of design actions should rely on the explanatory power of particular design instances. I suggest that the concept of responsibility, of an abstract responsibility, is incomplete. There is responsibility in everyday life, and it is messy, complex and situated. Instead of setting unrealistic goals, we should strive to develop awareness of both the range and the limits of choices available as we deal with issues of social responsibility. We can evaluate the designer's responsibility only in the context of other relationships. The responsibility of the designer then necessarily involves professional responsibility and responsibility as a member of society. This applies to the users and the rest of the planning team. The other participants are traditionally less likely to be considered as legitimate design participants because of their professional, social and cultural positions within society. I hope that the Sackville case study reinforces the idea that various social groups, institutions and individuals can be, and often are, powerful contributors to the design process and its outcomes, whether they want to admit it or not. Further advocacy and education should take place in creating a legislative and contractual base if the collaborations are to be more effective and transparent.

If democratic principles of community based design are to be realized, interdisciplinary design research should become more effective in exposing problems that arise in everyday design practice. Models of participatory work should integrate design with knowledge from diverse fields such as political science, sociology, anthropology and design planning theory. As my research illustrates, sociological knowledge of the design subject, and operational methods to acquire such knowledge, can be adopted in practical design applications, revealing and explaining many often hidden aspects of complex design practice. These aspects might include user's motivations, power relations among

design participants, and attitudes toward the design process and the transformations it brings to society. The challenge of course lies in identifying how interdisciplinary knowledge can extend from reflection on particular social or cultural phenomena to application in action oriented frameworks of design. My research revealed what could have been done if more careful management of interests and power had been integral in the design process. Going beyond the scope of this thesis to the broader design context I argue that the next step would be the more detailed development of practical mechanisms and tools that link knowledge to the everyday working practice permeated with relations of power and economic constraints.

Skills and opportunities for communities to follow more socially responsive, reciprocal and transparent practices are not givens. They should be nurtured and redefined continuously through facing and exposing various adversities and mechanisms of imposition of power. Community groups, with the help of professionals and academics, can pursue the goals of participatory socially responsive design only if they have sufficient knowledge, dedication and guidance. Broader and more detailed attention to collaborative design cases can lead toward greater awareness of the mechanisms of design implementation and create a basis for more functional and responsive policies in the field of participatory design.

In rationalizing the steps toward implementation of a design, it is not enough to have conceived a good design and display social sensitivity and intellectual capacity. The issues of power are fundamental. It is essential to pay more than lip service to issues of power relations and their incorporation into design research and professional activity. "In the *longue durée*, we see that in practice democratic progress is chiefly achieved not by constitutional and institutional reform alone but by facing the mechanisms of power and practices of class and privilege more directly, often head-on: if you want to participate in politics but find the possibilities for doing so constricting, then you team up with like-minded people and you fight for what you want, utilizing the means that work in your context to undermine those who try to limit participation" (Flyvbjerg, 1998:236). There are various means to achieve a balanced, democratic design process: building alliances,

strengthening communication, reforming public and governmental structures, developing more effective networks for sharing of interdisciplinary knowledge and redefining operational design tools to incorporate knowledge of and skills for social action. Every design situation will require a different combination of these means, but in no case should they be neglected in the social practice of design.

9.0 NOTES

1. Despite an escalation in the complexity of the urban realm, the "hegemonic geography still attempts to systematize those different spaces within one conceptual framework." (1993:133)

2. Designer and writer William Morris (1834-96), best known for his work and role in the Arts and Crafts movement in England, advanced a utopian vision of community that arose from his critical evaluation of social conditions in the industrialized world. Morris lectured extensively on what he saw as the degradation of a rapidly commercializing society of the Western world. Through articles, books and lectures he condemned the continuous decline of working people's quality of life, which was accelerating according to the theorist, despite the numerous industrial innovations introduced at this critical time. One of the reasons for such a state of affairs, according to Morris, was the inability of the middle class to resist the temptation of manufactured goods. Critics such as John Ruskin and William Morris viewed the manufacturer's exploitation of new techniques and mass-production as 'dishonest' through their 'inappropriate' use of materials and modes of construction, and further as key factors in dehumanized working conditions of manufacturing industries (Woodham, 1997:11-4). According to Morris (1884), only socialism was able to foster the growth of communities based on principles of social order and association rather than on competition and individualist anarchy, where work (and to a large extent craftsmanship) would again become enjoyable and important parts of every community member's life.

3. Wright called for a city composed of family homesteads that spread out from the crowded traditional cities. The private automobile and other modern means of communication would diminish problems associated with distance and accessibility in the community. A new kind of city community would thrive in the 'rural' landscape and would be founded on individualism and self-reliance. According to Wright this new 'urban' lifestyle would have the luxury of urban amenities and comforts, but would be situated in vast, open, de-centralized environments. Family stability would be achieved through the autonomy and isolation of individual dwelling units. The only 'centre' in Broadacre City would be the individual family home.

4. Examples of such writings are plentiful in the historical tradition of architectural reflection and in contemporary architectural criticism. Their sources are theoretically diverse while representing various normative positions. The range includes Nikolaus Pevsner's (1961) work on European architecture in which he characterizes buildings and spaces as either belonging or not belonging to the architectural realm depending on their aesthetic value, to Norberg-Schulz's (1965: 97) architectural theory construction based on acknowledging that architectural form is constituted through the relationship of elements such as "space cells," "mass forms," and "boundary surfaces", to the architectural criticism of Charles Jenks (1980) who refers to the architectural realm as a distinct reality

in order to figuratively and organizationally create, interpret and re-interpret contemporary urban environments.

5. The Paris flâneur was lured by the magnetism of the city streets, by the sensual power of crowds, by the erotic pleasures of window shopping and offerings of sexual pleasures outside of the family circle. One of the important aspects of urban culture that Benjamin was able to relate through his narrative, and that still remains important in the contemporary city, was that experience was atrophying - that there was a rise of spectacle and spectatorship, and that interpersonal relationships were being replaced with the packaged messages of a commodified culture of spectacle and merchandising.

6. Alberti criticized some aspects of fifteenth century Italian city life because they indicated a rupture between ethical ideals and people's "art-making propensity." (Jarzombek, 1989: 92) The separation of word from meaning and image from being in civic society represented to Alberti a loss of authentic values, while at the same time, opening some new opportunities for reform and transformation. Once divorced from the wholesomeness of "nature," people cannot be brought back to it, but the fragmentation of city life can be controlled by a continuous and conscious ordering process.

Alberti presents us with a vision of the ideal city, a place where there is no friction between "those who govern and those who are governed, between those who define the urban identity in their texts and those, including the writers, who put it into practice." (Jarzombek, 1989: 117) In the ideal case, according to Alberti, there would be no disjunction between the humanist and the rest of society. Striving, labouring and producing would bring virtue. Morality would be founded on effort and work.

7. "Early skateboarders in the 1960s were commonly surfers, and used skateboards when the surf was flat." (Borden, 1998:196-7)

8. During the period of the industrial revolution, William Morris (1834-96), through his work, made a conscious attempt to subvert the trend toward disciplinary specialization in architecture, fine art and design.

9. The approach to downtown design as a grid of square cells originates from the 16th century urbanists, however Le Corbusier was instrumental in introducing the highrise into the fabric of the geometric approach to urban development.

10. Le Corbusier himself left a significant architectural imprint in the urban representation of early soviet Russia. This occurred during the first decades of the young state's formation, when it still encouraged the avant-garde. He designed the Centrosoyus building in Moscow, which was built in 1929-1935. Later, in 1941, he was drawn to another 'strong' state regime - Vichy. He gave his best talents to the Vichy regime because he saw it as a viable and beneficial political environment for the creation and implementation of his concept of architecture and city planning as an doctrine for the whole of France.

11. A significant problem was attempting to order public space on the basis of a patriarchal value system that championed as 'universal' a desire for individual freedom and independence through preserving 'traditional' family and societal values.

12. This assumption becomes questionable from the perspective of women locked in suburban isolation. As the suburbs expanded in North America and Australia during the 1960s and 1970s, and were spreading further and further from city centres, many women experienced an increased sense of social isolation because they had poor access to central activities and increased exposure to domesticated cultural consumption through television and other means of advertising. As Deborah Chambers (1997:88) argues, the suburban lifestyle was a "material and cultural expression of the ideology of feminine domesticity: woman as a homemaker."

13. On a theoretical level, Le Corbusier was intending to realize a "water-tight formula to arrive at the fundamental principles of modern town planning" through "absolute economy," structure, technology and function. (Le Corbusier, 1996:368-74) His attempt to produce a single home type that served certain 'universal' needs revealed a prophetic vision of a society striving toward a common destiny.

14. The names of the community members serving on the Board of Directors of the Tantramar Regional Civic Centre and several informants were changed to protect their identities.

15. Service and retail sectors make up more than 90 per cent of Sackville's total economy (Official Town of Sackville website: http://www.sackville.com). The majority of these jobs pay little more than minimum wage. The average income among females in Sackville is approximately $16,000. per annuum, or about half that of males (Statistics Canada, 1996).

16. The new building was to replace an existing rink, Allison Gardens, which has been operated by the University for 50 years, but is in poor condition.

17. Hockey is an important form of leisure and entertainment (and for participants, exercise) for many community members. It has been supported and encouraged quite often at the expense of other possible recreational and social activities. To some town residents, hockey is *the* sport and symbol of physical activity, especially during the Winter season. This strong preference or inclination was illustrated in a conversation I had with a local acquaintance. He told me that his grandchildren aren't as physically active as they should be at their age. According to the concerned grandfather, the problem was that the cost of hockey equipment was too high to consider sports more seriously. Other alternatives such as track and field, biking, gymnastics or basketball were not mentioned (Eaton, December 10, 2000).

18. Centres visited by the Community Centre Committee were: River Valley Centre in Perth Andover, N.B.; Carleton Civic Centre in Woodstock, N.B.; River Valley Community Centre in Grand Bay, N.B.; Recreaplex Inc. in Dalhousie, N.B.; K. C. Irving Regional Civic Centre in Bathurst, N.B.; Campbellton Memorial Civic Centre in Campbellton, N.B.; and The Don Henderson Memorial Sportsplex in Brookfield, N.S..

19. Community centres are, of course, not unique to the Maritimes. This type of public space, including indoor and outdoor components, is a vital part of the Canadian public landscape. For the last 60 years, community centres in Manitoba provided space for residents' "socials, dinners, family and club gathering, whist drives, and hockey practices" (Winder, 1998:86). Their built form has varied around a basic pattern of community room with kitchen facilities and outdoor ice surfaces. Manitoba's older community centres are less elaborate. Many of these are not used for team hockey games, but remain popular even today and are used by various community groups for many alternative activities such as square dances, teen dances, local band performances, bingo, and winter carnivals.

20. According to Sanoff (2000:1), current "community participation theory as an approach to social development is an outgrowth of the United Nations' popular participation programs that required the creation of opportunities for all people to be politically involved and share in the development process." Community participation, however, has different significance and optimal methods of implementation depending on the situation. Two main levels of participation can be identified. Pseudoparticipation involves people primarily though informing them about the facts relating to the project. Genuine participation occurs where people are empowered to control the action taken (see Alinsky, 1972).

21. Future project developments were to expose the fragility of such legal agreements and the selectiveness of what is followed and what is forgotten when jumping political and economic hurdles.

22. At this stage of the project the price of the facility was only speculation based on the examples of other facilities in the region.

23. I joined the Board (at first as a non-voting Board member) at end of the 1998.

24. Tim remains a long term volunteer and referee in the local Soccer Association.

25. "The Board of the Tantramar Regional Civic Centre and the Town of Sackville are pleased to have a motion presented this evening to release funds for development of design drawings for the Civic Centre project. . . . It has been agreed that the design for the building be developed in such a way as to allow construction of the arena portion of the facility as the first phase, if additional funds need to be raised. This schedule will ensure the availability of an arena for the next winter season" (Sackville Town Council, February

21, 2000).

26. While participating in the work of the TRCC Board I learned a lot through my contributions to the project. Acknowledging my own emotions and judgements helped me critically evaluate the complex social environment within which the project evolved. I also came to terms with the idea that the findings of the study won't please everyone. Some individuals and groups in Sackville will be identified through their relationship to the project, and will perhaps appear less multi-dimensional than they deserve. I further concede that a project of this scale is an intricate and continuing undertaking, and only time will reveal the full impact of the Civic Centre project on Sackville and its people.

27. The University has plenty of paved surfaces. Local skateboarders have often favoured its sites. In response to this unconventional use of the campus domain, the University decided that children pose a liability risk and banned these local skateboarders for 30 days from entering University grounds. It meant that this group of children was not only not allowed to skateboard, but also to attend public swimming sessions or lessons (the University pool is the only pool in Sackville). Of course, the repair of steps and metal railings is expensive and was a valid problem and had to be dealt with. The University administration, however, took the road more travelled and, instead of approaching the skateboarding 'problem' as a communal issue, enforced spatial segregation as means of getting rid of undesirable 'others.'

28. Another such occurrence took place in May of 1999 when a 98-year-old building known as the Richardson Store was taken down because restoring it would have been too costly. The Town was interested in preserving the building, but the property was owned by Mount Allison and the University refused to assist the Town in paying for restoration.

29. To be fair, there are several places and occasions where townies and University people come together. The local pub located in downtown Sackville often attracts, after the work day ends, a wide variety of similarly exhausted professors, students, town Councillors and local mechanics. University sports team games also unite many townies, University staff and parents of the players.

30. Funding to these areas was reduced by almost 60 %.

31. To be fair to the employees of the Sackville Planning Commission, there were several occasions, especially during the last couple of years, when issues of environmental control and of local architectural preservation were defended by the planners to Town Council.

32. Strikingly similar patterns of political manoeuvring took place recently in Campbellton and Caraquet, New Brunswick. The politically-charged events were described in a segment on a CBC Radio One morning program (Poitras, January 31, 2000). Both communities held provincial by-elections in February 2001. The main

election campaign issue in Campbellton was the financing of a long track speed skating facility. The municipality is currently competing to have the 2003 Canada Winter Games held in the region, and hopes to have a permanent track as a result of this initiative. The federal government and local municipality already committed funds for the track, but the province has refused to do the same. During the last elections, Campbellton voters chose a Liberal representative to serve as their MLA in Fredericton. According to a local Councillor, people feel that they have been held accountable for not voting "on the right side of the [majority Conservative] government." In the Fall of 2000, Conservative Premier Bernard Lord was quoted as saying that his party won't be encouraging electors in the region to cast their votes on the government's side. He stressed that provincial politicians should rather offer ideas and plans and address the issues that are of concern to the people. A more recent message from the Premier appeared on the Conservative Party's campaign pamphlet, and was quite different. "You could have someone who is going to come and work with us, to work for you. Or you can elect someone who will work against us and therefore against you." The construction of the skating track hung in the balance.

The local pet project in Caraquet concerns an old school that the Town has bought and turned into a community centre. It now accommodates local arts organizations and other groups. The plans are to build a theatre in the building. While local community centre organizers have been fundraising for the construction of the theatre, no money has been granted by governments for the proposed project. Caraquet, like Campbellton, had voted Liberal in the last election in the face of a huge win across the province by the Torys. Another local organization, the Acadian Peninsula Volunteer Centre had said no to government grants 15-16 years ago. Refusing government handouts meant tighter budgets, but the Centre is proud what it does on a shoe string. According to the leader of the Centre, saying no to grants gave them choice and liberty. Nevertheless, this group is more the exception than the rule in the region. "Getting things done often means getting government money and getting government money has a lot to do with who you vote for."

The Conservative candidates won both by-elections. According to CBC Reporter Jacques Poitras, the message sent from voters to the reigning party in both cases was: "We like you and we would like you to approve our local pet project."

33. It is harder to be participating pro-actively when the clients (especially public or governmental organizations) choose, or are obligated to go through, a public bidding process when seeking professional services. An architect involved in a competitive bidding has to produce a rather resolved conceptual design in response to already formed preliminary planning directives coming from the client. In Sackville's case, regulatory procedures required Town Council to proceed with an open competition for the architectural services. The local government was hesitant to involve the architect early in the process because it was not certain about the funding prospects. In this instance, an early call for architectural services would have represented a calculated risk, but in the long run would have improved the quality of the design process.

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11.0 APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1: Tantramar Regional Civic Centre Proposed Conceptual Design Comment Sheet

TANTRAMAR REGIONAL CIVIC CENTRE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET

In November of 1996 Mayor Will Campbell appointed a Community Centre Committee to determine the information required and appropriate process needed to establish a multi-purpose community centre in the Town of Sackville to service the Tantramar Area.

During the time period of November 1996 - April 23, 1997 the Community Centre Committee researched, visited and studied the operations & governance Models of six multi-purpose facilities in the New Brunswick and one in Nova Scotia. The Community Centre Committee Report was presented to Sackville Town Council on April 23, 1997 and recommended that Council establish an independent, incorporated, non-profit regional board to act as the legal body in A) Determine the level of public support for a Regional Multi-Purpose facility in Sackville to service the Tantramar Region and B) If warranted by the region, proceed with plans to finance, construct, equip, operate and maintain in a prudent and business like manner, a Regional Multi-Purpose Facility.

In June of 1997 the Mayor appointed the Tantramar Civic Centre Board and they began to work on the mandate outlined in the Community Centre Committee Report.

Since June of 1997 the Tantramar Regional Civic Centre Board has been involved with the following:

A) The Preparation, Distribution & Analysis of a user survey from the Tantramar Region.
B) The identification of a common vision (based on input received from residents) which involved the construction of a multi-purpose facility which would include an arena as a cornerstone, act as the Town Recreation Centre, community meeting rooms, outdoor playing fields for soccer, football and rec centre programs, a walking tracks and facilitate all ages and activities.
C) With the Assistance of Recreation Facility Consultant John Meaghar, a number of parcels of land in Sackville were reviewed and resulting from that process, the Board determined that the Agricultural Canada Site best met the needs for the facility. Plans to acquire this property were put in place.
D) With the property and vision in place, Mr. Meaghar again assisted the Board in preparing a prospectus describing the project and to obtain quotes from Architects and Engineers.
E) With the board fully incorporated and submissions reviewed. Architects 4 was hired to prepare the conceptual design that the Board is proposing.

CONSTRUCTION COSTS

The total costs of the plan you have reviewed is $4,744,300. A breakdown of these costs includes the following:

Land Acquisition	- $ 127,000	Site Work	- $ 522,000
Arena Facility	2,730,000	Community Centre	1,027,300
Playing Field Const	104,000	Arch & Prof Fees	230,000

FUNDING FORMULA

Throughout New Brunswick, projects have been funded using the following formula:

1/3 from the Federal Government through its various programs ($1.6 million)
1/3 from the Provincial Government through its community support programs ($1.6 million)
1/3 from the Municipality ($1.6 million)

The Municipality contribution is usually made up of two parts:
A) Municipal taxes: In our case, we feel that it would be reasonable for the Town of Sackville to produce $1.0 million.
B) Fund raising: In the community and with Foundations, our consultants think that we can raise $600,000 to $1Million from this group.

Residents should note that in utilizing the above funding formula the amount of funding contributed by the Municipality - Region determines the amount of funding the project is eligible for from the Federal & Provincial governments respectively.

Conceptual plans and the information/comments sheets will be available throughout the region during November 16-27th. For specific information please contact the Sackville Parks & Recreation Department or your Village Office.

TANTRAMAR REGIONAL CIVIC CENTRE
PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL DESIGN
COMMENT SHEET

PLEASE RETURN TO THE PARKS & RECREATION DEPT IN SACKVILLE OR TO YOUR VILLAGE OFFICE BY NOVEMBER 26TH

NAME (OPTIONAL) _____

ORGANIZATION NAME ?_____

NUMBER OF PEOPLE REPRESENTED BY THIS COMMENT SHEET _____

AGE GROUP CATEGORIES REPRESENTED BY THIS COMMENT SHEET (Please Circle)

UNDER 19 **19 - 35** **35 - 50** **50 & OVER**

1. **DO YOU SUPPORT THE OUTLINED CONCEPT IN PRINCIPLE?**

   YES_____ **NO** _____

   IF NOT WHY NOT?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. **WHAT IS THE BEST THING THAT COULD HAPPEN IF THIS PROPOSED MULTI-PURPOSE FACILITY WAS TO BECOME A REALITY?**

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. **CAN YOU SUGGEST ANY IMPROVEMENTS/ALTERATIVES TO OUR PROPOSED PLAN?**

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

4. **DO YOU PAY RESIDENTIAL AND/OR BUSINESS PROPERTY TAXES IN THE TANTRAMAR REGION: YES**_____ **NO**_____

   IF YES WHERE?
   TOWN OF SACKVILLE_____ **VILLAGE OF PORT ELGIN**_____
   VILLAGE OF DORCHESTER _____ **UNINCORPORATED AREA**_____

5. **OTHER COMMENTS:**

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

11.2 Appendix 2: Tanramar Regional Civic Centre Proposed Conceptual Design Summary of Comments

268 Forms were returned to the organizers of the project.

Suggestions for improvements/alternatives to the proposed plan:

- Build a functional but attractive and imaginative building - not the usual Hen House concept so prevalent in NB (e.g. "Co-op").

Arena:

- Rink should be the main venue.
- Arena should accommodate Mt A youth, hold hockey schools, tournaments (Xmas hockey tournaments) and serve as a training centre for hockey and figure skating (especially useful as off season training facility).
- The complex needs to be completed by Jan. 2000 in order to keep Minor Hockey running.
- The ice surface should be made visible from staff room and maintenance room - windows looking onto ice.
- The game clock/score board and regular time clock should be placed so that they are visible at all times.
- An in/out 'cat door' for 'rinky' should be installed.
- Comfortable seats in the rink (within heated area) - like in Memramcook.
- Seating: instead of "bench type" it could be separate seats. They would be more attractive and serviceable.
- Add 500 more seats in the arena.
- Include the construction of an ice plant that can make ice year round.
- Consider floor covering for ice (for added use in summer and winter).
- There should be ample space allocated for dressing rooms.
- Hope that ice time will be available upon request and that the price for these activities will not be raised.
- Relocate rink down closer to Main Street.

Building design and layout:

- Concessions and kitchen should be "hooked" together so the deep fryers could be used for both.
- Cooking area could serve both the canteen and a private group at the same time.
- Have Tim Horton's or some others run a snack shop part time.
- We need 'family' washrooms in the arena and in the community area.

- Placement of the rink seems to make too much area unusable.
- Considering the shortage of space, the plans for the "Civic Park" could be revised.
- The offices to coordinate programs for the centre could be located in other existing buildings (i.e., Atlantic Wholesalers Building, The Recreation Department Building) instead of adding them to Civic Centre.
- Facilities (outdoor basketball court and tennis court) currently located downtown, could be more efficiently managed at the new Civic Centre location.
- Make sure there are enough emergency exists as a large crowd of people can't all leave by the main door.

Multi-purpose room:

- All purpose room is too small.
- There is a need for a suitable rental hall in the area.
- All purpose room needs a 5000 square feet area for a dance or banquet.
- All purpose room should be large enough to seat 250+ people.
- Put hardwood in multi-purpose room for square dancing.
- Consolidate some meeting rooms and bathrooms.
- Seniors should have a room, not an office.
- When designing the layout of such a facility, seek input from caterers, disc jockeys, musicians so that the layout would serve clients better.
- Wire the meeting rooms and main space for training sessions, conferences, Internet connections, cable, etc.

Parking lot and traffic related issues:

- Police should be looking into the matter of traffic flow.
- We need two entrances and exits (access road off King Street). We should make sure that everyone is not entering and exiting into a blind hill on Main Street.
- Extra entrance and exit would be important in case of emergency or fire.
- Parking on a major artery (Main Street) should be avoided.
- Do not make parking space any smaller.
- Keep the 200 parking spaces.
- There are more than 200 cars attending the Fireman's Winter Carnival now - so you need at least that and more.
- During periods of heavy snow fall the parking lot will become considerably smaller (snow will be pushed to the sides).
- Add second soccer field by making the parking lot smaller. If there is not enough parking, add second level.
- More playing field area could be made if the parking lot was designed differently (i.e., not rectangular, but perhaps a more 'creative' layout for the parking lot).
- For most usage, parking lot is too big. It might be useful to reduce parking lot size but keep an overflow parking area.

- Perhaps a section of the parking lot could be set up/used for skateboarders (at their own risk?). There is one location in town already, but there are many skateboarders on the university campus. A second location might be desirable.

Soccer fields and facilities:

- Soccer association will not benefit if there is only one field (two fields are needed for scheduling games and practices for different age groups). Consider looking at the Hunter River Soccer Complex in PEI.
- One field does not meet the needs of the 250+ members of the Sackville Youth Soccer Association.
- Only $100,000 on a $4.7 million dollar project is devoted to soccer.
- Mt A fields are not an affordable option for the Sackville Soccer Association.
- Add second soccer field by taking out some green area on the left.
- The budget must make room for soccer field needs such as bleachers, players' benches, field maintenance equipment. It could be met for one-one hundredth of the rink budget.
- Make sure that the dimensions of larger field are at least 65 yds x 110 yds of actual playing surface.
- Soccer fields are not needed. There are enough fields around town already.
- Six soccer pitches in Town should suffice.

Additional facilities proposed:

- Add an extra playing field to support the demands of football (60 players are registered at the High School level) and soccer and track & field needs.
- There should be a 400 meter track of at least 6 lanes' width (indoor track, and outdoor track around the perimeter of soccer field) included in the plan.
- Include an 8 lane all weather outdoor track that would surround existing playing field.
- Seniors welcome a good walking track and an indoor facility to walk in bad weather.
- With the track and field facilities, the centre could hold such events as the Atlantic Outdoor Track and Field Championships (approx. 400 athletes + coaches + supporters for a two day event), NB Outdoor Track and Field Championships (approx. 250 athletes for one day event), NBIAA High School Track and Field Championships (400 athletes for one day event).
- Add squash/racquet courts, a lit soccer field (so that older kids could play later into the evening).
- Add weight room and exercise facility (where adults could work out).
- Make sure there is a room for aerobics or dancing with wall length mirrors, a bar and a special cushioned floor.

- Accommodate young adults age group (i.e. above the age of 20) that would like to be in intramural teams such as volleyball, basketball, soccer and floor hockey.
- Add greater pool facilities (with diving boards, slides, a hot tub, separate pool for little kids?).
- Centre should have a few pool tables.
- Consider a sports equipment rental (i.e., skates, cross country skis and poles, soccer balls, footballs, softball equipment - ball, bases, bats, gloves).
- Centre should have a playground with slides, swings, sand boxes and play structures.
- 1% of total cost should be spent acquiring art for a new building.

Programing issues:

- Include other activities besides hockey: including an area for just a boys/girls club, youth drop-in centre (play ping-pong, pool, Nintendo, dances, mini golf etc.), seniors club - considering that not everyone is involved in organized sports.
- Possible programs: woodcraft, cooking, intramural volleyball, basketball, floor hockey for 20+ .
- Centre could be a facility for learning: a neutral environment for learning crafts, cooking, gaining other skills, reading (library?).
- Continue with the many winter programs - perhaps develop a larger summer program.
- Consider developing a larger summer program for children in the new location.
- Consider accommodating local Air Cadets (drill space and offices).
- Increase community events that can be held indoors in bad weather.
- Off season the facility can be used as an exhibition center.
- Consider having child care service at the centre (during events, classes, etc.)
- Hold some top notch entertainment during tournaments.
- Increase number of tournaments (floor hockey and football) and trade shows.
- Facility could be used for family oriented events such as winter carnivals, Easter egg hunts for the little ones, Christmas caroling and decorating a town tree, wedding receptions; and community events such as music shows, theater and music group performances, agricultural fairs and Canada Day celebrations.

Suggestions toward generation of revenue:

- Potential for revenue generation for the Centre: a Pro Shop, rental of meeting rooms, flea markets, introduce user fees.
- Town organized fund raising activities: Bingo, scavenger hunts, fund raising games like police vs fire department soccer games to start the soccer season, walkathons.
- Memberships for use of such facilities as squash courts, fitness programs could be sold separately to raise some money.

- Cut cleaning costs by requiring each group using the facility to clean up after themselves.

General comments in relation to the question:
'What is the best thing that could happen if this proposed multi-purpose facility was to become a reality?'

- The good things that could happen are endless.
- It will be a facility owned by the residents.
- We can be proud of our rink and town.
- Centre will provide community with focal point.
- It will draw town closer together.
- Citizens have a say in the running of the facility, and not Mount A.
- There will be less conflict over use of the facilities (between Town and Mount A.)
- All parties in the region (Sackville, Dorchester, Port Elgin and Mount Allison) will cooperate in the use of the facility.

- Sackville will have a multi-purpose facility for year round use.
- Increased use of the facility will encourage healthier lifestyle.
- Centre will help attract employers to do business in Sackville - this will help create jobs.
- The Town would not have to lose as many clients to the Wandlyn in Amherst, especially those seeking better rental facilities for weddings.
- A Community Centre will encourage people to stay in Town for their activities.
- Centre will promote the region.
- It would be an attraction for families considering Sackville as a home.
- Sackville will be put on the map as a place where major tournaments and often money-making events would be held.

- The centre will be accessible.
- The facilities will be less crowded than at Mount A.
- Young and old will enjoy the facility that offers a wide range of programs.
- Location close to the Drew (will) allow seniors access to organized activities.
- People with disabilities would be able to use facilities on the ground level.
- It will give our youth and future youth a place for a wide range of programs, a place to learn responsibility, patience, build character and a sense of fair play.
- It would keep young people off the streets.

- It would provide a safe environment for town youth and children to gather for events such as Halloween parties, and participate in organized sports and enjoy themselves.

- A place to meet others and 'hang out' for town youth.

General comments in relation to the questions:
'Do you support the outlined concept in principle? If not why not?'

- It is too grandiose a scheme. An arena is all we require.
- We already have meeting and activity places, e.g. Curling Club, Library, Lions, Churches and etc.
- Project will probably leave the community debt ridden for years to come.
- A complex of this magnitude cannot operate at a profit.
- Town cannot afford it, because there are too many low paying jobs in Sackville.
- Paying for the centre by municipal taxes is not equitable. A more fair system would be to charge a "head tax" to the citizens of Sackville until the facility is completely paid for.
- Use tax increases to improve town streets.
- The absolute maximum that might be raised (over a 3 year period) through a funding campaign in Sackville would be perhaps $ 250.000.
- why the community centre, when we already have meeting and activity places, e.g. curling club, Library, Lions, Churches, etc. How about unused part of Atlantic Wholesaler Building? And what's going to happen with the present Recreation Centre?

Other concerns and suggestions:

- Do you have enough money and committed people to operate a structure of this size and run different facets the programs? It would take a lot more than just the loyal volunteers.
- Municipality contribution should be through fund raising and contributions without increasing taxes.
- The facility will cost more to run than the revenues generated.
- Have you allocated enough money to cover maintenance costs?
- Can add the rest of the complex later (after water tower is paid for).
- Facility should be closer to town.
- Centre should be closer to the university (then there is more chance students and people who don't drive will use it more often).
- Too much focus on hockey and not enough on soccer.

- Keep communicating with residents at every step of the way so that they feel they are a part of this.
- It is important at this stage for all user groups to discuss their future needs (old rink/new rink, etc.).

- The proposed plan should be presented in our local newspaper so all of the 'players' (parenting and non-parenting public) could have input.
- This facility should be available to all people on a first-come first-serve basis, without town residents having a preferential treatment (families that live in the Sackville School District should be able to send their kids for the activities in the Civic Centre, instead of going to Amherst and spending money there).
- Use local contractors for as much work as possible during the construction.

- Get assurance of monies from Provincial and Federal governments in writing.
- The town and its citizens must show their own support if we expect cooperation and a reasonable support from Provincial and Federal Governments.
- The town and the committee had better triple check the numbers to make sure we don't make a decision and find different numbers later.
- Increase in taxes, need fund raising in an aggressive manner.
- Fund raising suggestions: donation money boxes should be left in Sackville and in surrounding areas, receipts could be issued for $ 5.00 +; use % of proceeds from fast food drives, get corporate donations (Irving, Imperial, etc.), hold fund raising events where for a certain donation people could buy a brick or a tile in the building and get their name engraved on it (i.e., Harbour Station).
- Dorchester should be included as part of the fund raising.
- Mount Allison University should be involved formally in the project in some way if you intend to rent ice time to them.
- Eliminate the divided interest of Town and university concerning the use of the facility. Ownership of the facility should be placed in the hands of the majority shareholder and facility user.
- Let's get the multipurpose facility started before Mount Allison takes control of it.
- Don't worry about making a profit. Try to break even. Make sure the public is aware of all savings. Assess taxes if more donations received.

- Moms and Dads find it very convenient to have the summer day camp (park and play area for the kids) located downtown. The relocation of this program to the new centre would make it less convenient.
- Tennis program was an important part of the summer camp, there are no plans to have a tennis court in the new facility.
- How accessible will special populations programs be in the new location?